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Dear readers,

Welcome to the eighth issue of the KeyCoNet newsletter.

KeyCoNet is the European Policy Network on Key Competences in School Education, funded under the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Programme. This newsletter aims to keep readers up to date with the network’s news, activities and outputs. KeyCoNet News is published three times a year providing regular reporting on developments regarding the network’s activities, website and events, as well as EU, international and national news related to key competence development in school education.

Each issue also features a special focus either on a specific aspect of key competence development, or a recent output of the network’s activities. This edition’s special focus reports on the network’s recent peer learning visit to Malta, where a competence-based education reform targeting low achievers has recently been implemented.

We wish all our readers, and especially our newly joined associates, a pleasant read of this issue.

Caroline Kearney
(Education Analyst & KeyCoNet Project Manager, European Schoolnet)
On behalf of the KeyCoNet Network
ABOUT KEYCONET - THE KEY COMPETENCE NETWORK

KeyCoNet (http://keyconet.eun.org), funded under the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Programme, is a growing network of more than 100 organizations representing educational stakeholder groups from 27 European countries, focused on improving the implementation of competence-based education in schools across Europe.

KeyCoNet is focused on analyzing initiatives on the implementation of key competences in primary and secondary school education across Europe. Visit the Project Results page on the KeyCoNet website (http://keyconet.eun.org/project-results) to access the various outputs produced by the network so far.

KeyCoNet has produced two literature reviews on key issues in relation to the definition and implementation of key competences in school education in Europe and assessment approaches. Moreover, network partners have collaborated with project coordinators at national level to produce case notes describing Key Competence Development (KCD) initiatives taking place in their countries. The most interesting of these case notes have been developed into case studies (detailed analyses based on a rigorous methodology drafted by researchers and policy analysts).

A European mapping report and country overviews have also been produced and made available on our website, monitoring the state of progress of KCD in various countries across Europe. Each year, peer learning visits take place in a country where an interesting KCD reform has been identified. The latest peer learning visit took place in Malta, where the Core Curriculum Programme which uses a competence-based approach to improve the learning of low achievers is in its first year of implementation. Read our Special Focus section to find out more!

Finally, on the basis of the evidence collected during the project’s lifetime via the above mentioned outputs, recommendations for policy and practice are progressively being formulated, regarding the enablers and obstacles to a holistic implementation of KCD.

Although this project uses the 2006 European Framework as a reference point, we are aware that key competences can be expressed and understood in different ways, according to each national context. The network therefore embraces an open and inclusive approach.

Among KeyCoNet’s core partners and associates partners, are Ministries of Education/related agencies, universities/research institutes, European organizations and practice related partners. This diverse partnership allows for effective cross-fertilization between policy makers, researchers and practitioners. KeyCoNet also has a growing number of associate members, and aims to further increase the number of participating countries and expand the diversity of its stakeholders. Check out the next section of this newsletter to learn more about our 23 new associate members who re-

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- 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
- Cultural awareness and expression

European Framework for Key Competences (2006)
cently joined the network, and the Get Involved section to become an associate member.

A GROWING NETWORK: NEW ASSOCIATES ON BOARD FROM 13 COUNTRIES!

KeyCoNets’s community of associate members continues to grow and we are very pleased to welcome 23 new organizations from 13 countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, UK - See map in Figure 1 below) who have recently joined us. New associate members can contribute to the KeyCoNet network, and benefit from it, in several ways, including offering their unique perspectives on the network’s draft recommendations for policy and practice on the implementation of key competences in school education.

Figure 1: Map showing countries in which new KeyCoNet associates have joined

- Countries with new KeyCoNet associates
- Countries where KeyCoNet is looking for new associates (contact keyconet-info@eun.org)

http://keyconet.eun.org
For this eighth Edition of KeyCoNews, we asked some of our new associate members to introduce themselves and to share with us the reason why they joined KeyCoNet.

The European Parents’ Association - Europe

“Our special focus is the acknowledgement of the role of parents as primary – the first and most impacting educators – in the building of skills and competences and promoting parental involvement at all levels of education and decision making.”

The European Parents’ Association (EPA) has been committed for a long time to the promotion of building key competences as the way forward for education in the 21st century among parents all over Europe. Our special focus is the acknowledgement of the role of parents as primary – the first and most impacting educators – in the building of skills and competences and promoting parental involvement on all levels of education and decision making. EPA has followed the work of KeyCoNet and we were happy to join as associate partners when invited. We have been involved in many other activities, organised conferences and workshops and spread information amongst our members on state-of-the-art ideas in this field. EPA people know that there is a long way to build a 21st century education system in each European country, to train parents to understand new concepts and to prepare them for participation. At the same time we also try to be there to make other stakeholders, especially policy makers, school heads and teachers understand the parental position and the importance of co-operation in all fields and areas.

Education Scotland – UK

“The work of KeyCoNet relates to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland in a number of ways.”

Education Scotland (ES) is the Scottish Government’s national improvement agency for education. It is charged with providing support and challenge to the education system, from the early years to adult learning, in furtherance of the government’s policy objectives. Education Scotland is the key national body supporting quality and improvement in Scottish Education. More information about our remit, framework and key areas of work can be found on our website: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/about/index.asp

We were introduced to KeyCoNet through a presentation given by the network’s coordinator at a Cidree Expert Meeting on the assessment of competences in school education in March of this year. The work of KeyCoNet relates to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland in a number of ways. For example, of interest to both would be the development of pedagogy, linking assessment to learning and equipping all learners with the skills and competences they require for learning, life and work in the 21st Century.
The National Centre for Education (NCE) is a public administration institution directly subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. NCE’s primary functions are to: develop curriculum for preschool, basic and general secondary and vocational education; develop subject standards and sample teaching-learning programs; provide development of national examinations in basic education, general secondary education and vocational education; coordinate the development of textbooks in accordance with national standards for general and vocational education; to coordinate support system for learners with special needs; coordinate informal learning activities and implement support activities for the development of learners’ personalities and talents; organize the Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Celebration; and coordinate teacher continuing professional development activities as well as organize state language proficiency testing. We were pleased to receive information about KeyCoNet from European Schoolnet and decided to participate because we are currently developing new competence-based national education standards.

The Pedagogical Institute is a Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. It has a developmental mission which covers all levels of education operating towards various directions: it offers in-service training and continuous professional development to teachers of all levels through several compulsory programmes and optional seminars; it plans and executes education research and evaluation studies; it follows and adapts current trends in pedagogy; it promotes the use of new technologies in education and undertakes the writing and publication of teaching books, the designing of the curriculum and the production of teaching materials. The Pedagogical Institute can contribute to the development of key competences at schools through teacher training, studies it undertakes at schools and the writing and publication of teaching books.
The University of South Bohemia has about 9000 students and offers degrees in teacher education, biology, social health, theology, agriculture and philosophy. The Faculty of Education of the University of South Bohemia has more than 3500 students. Currently, the faculty is responding to the increased social demand for improvement of the educational process leading to raising the quality of financial literacy, and amongst other projects it is involved in the international project KeyCoMath (for further information on this project see the EU News section of this newsletter).

Secondary School of Tourism Aleko Konstantinov - Bulgaria

The students are prepared to use foreign languages at a professional level, using a competence-based approach.

The professional high school of tourism Aleko Konstantinov is a public school counting 427 students, 42 teachers and 12 non-teaching staff. It provides vocational education and training in the field of tourism. The students acquire knowledge and skills for the following occupations: “organization of tourism and leisure time”, “tourist guide”, “hotel organization” and “social activities assistant”. The specialty “restaurant organization and management” was made available in 2010 for students who completed their secondary education. The students learn English, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian and they are prepared to use these languages at a professional level, using a competence-based approach. The school is a member of the Cambridge Schools Association. Teams within the school have worked with the following programmes of the European Union: Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, PHARE and OP Human Resource Development of the European Social Fund. In 2009, the school was awarded the Quality Certificate in the category “Quality Project Management” for the project “Training of young tourist staff in European realities” under the program Leonardo da Vinci. The school is working in partnership projects under the program Erasmus+ Mobility of students and staff- practices and exchange of experience.
Iancu C. Vissarion High School is a secondary school of 800 students between 12 and 19 years-old, and has the biggest number of students and teachers from the South Muntenia region in Romania. Most of our students come from the rural area, within 50km of the town of Titu.

We heard about the network from our Educational Inspector and we decided to join to better understand what competence-based education is about. We hope to increase student’s interest for learning through this project - boys and girls equally. We hope that this project will help reduce the phenomenon of early school drop-out.
KEYCONET WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WARMLY WELCOME OUR OTHER ASSOCIATES WHO HAVE RECENTLY JOINED:

**BULGARIA**

- Institute of Mathematics

**CROATIA**

- Municipal center for extracurricular activities

**DENMARK**

- University College Syddanemark

**GERMANY**

- University of Bayreuth

**LATVIA**

- Education development center

**GREECE**

- 5ο ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ Ν. ΑΛΙΚΑΡΝΑΣΣΟΥ
- 1ο Γενικό Λύκειο Ξάνθης
- Primary School Highland Zone

[http://keyconet.eun.org](http://keyconet.eun.org)
KEYCONET WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WARMLY WELCOME OUR OTHER ASSOCIATES WHO HAVE RECENTLY JOINED:

--- SLOVAKIA ---
University of Trnava

--- SLOVENIA ---
University of Ljubljana

--- UK ---
Bigga Fish

--- EU ---
KeyCoMath

Tree-Europe

http://keyconet.eun.org
Creativity has been identified as a transversal key competence, underpinning the eight core key competences. But how best to promote and support learner creativity? This was a key question at the Creativity - Innovation Challenge conference, held in Paris from 7 – 10 July 2014.

KeyCoNet partner, the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (EIESP), was a co-organizer of the conference, with lead partners from the International Centre for Innovation in Education and the Paris Descartes University. The conference keynote speakers addressed a diverse range of issues – including Creativity in Science and Mathematics (presented by Prof Jacques Gregoire), Getting from Creative Potential to Creative Talent (Dr. Todd Lubart of Paris Descartes University) Dr. Riel Miller (UNESCO Foresight Division) and the role personality, gender and geography in deciding who is most likely to pursue careers in innovation (Prof Barbara Kerr, University of Kansas). There were also a number of lively discussions in parallel sessions on how to integrate creativity in the classroom, creativity and ICT, the importance of school environment and, support for exceptional children.

EIESP also held a special symposium on Innovations in Learning and Teaching for boosting the creativity of learners. KeyCoNet presented its work on creativity and other key competences in the Poster session. More than 300 participants from 80 countries attended the conference. Find out more on the conference’s website: http://www.paris.icieconference.net/

In Europe, the demand for ICT workers is out-numbering the supply which risks overshadowing the continent’s potential for growth and digital competitiveness. In May 2014, the European Commission launched the “e-Skills for Jobs” campaign together with the Hellenic Presidency of the EU’s Council of Ministers. This multi-stakeholder initiative aims to supply Europeans with the required ICT skills and brings together representatives from the industry, education, and policy sectors. This timely international symposium provides an invaluable opportunity for key stakeholders within the public and private sector to explore the measures that are being taken to reduce e-skills shortages, gaps and mismatches, and to move towards a more competitive Europe. For further information please consult the event’s webpage: http://www.publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/events/EI17-PPE2.php

The European Parents’ Association, an associate member of KeyCoNet, is co-organising a conference
with the TA Group in Riga on 19-20 September on Creativity and Thinking Skills in Learning, Teaching and Management.

Today’s realities mean that we must empower our children, the school students of today to become creative and critical thinkers, and problem solvers. Even educators, parents and teachers alike must become lifelong learners, and educate children to become people who never lose curiosity and who can apply their new knowledge to unique, complex challenges, even with no known right solutions. Traditional education systems routinely teach students how to use various sets of cognitive tools to make life at school easier, to have better grades and better learning outcomes. They learn tools for note-taking, memorising texts and facts, to organise and reproduce information. When the focus shifts from learning facts to learning how to think we are more likely to successfully prepare them for the uncertain future ahead. To be able to shape this future both creative and critical thinking skills need to be developed. The rich programme of the Creativity and Thinking Skills in Learning, Teaching and Management Conference focuses on various aspects of this theme.

KeyCoNet members and readers are very welcome to join this conference in Riga. You can find the invitation, registration links and the preliminary programme at http://euparents.eu/News_list/INVITATION.

ESHA Conference – Bringing Leadership Together - 27-29 October 2014, Dubrovnik

The European School Heads Association (ESHA) is holding a conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia on 27-29 October 2014. The three-day conference entitled ‘Bringing Leadership together’ already counts Parsi Sahlberg from Finland, Guy Claxon and Tobu Salt from England and Vedrana Spajic Vrkas from Croatia as keynote speakers. Further information about keynote and workshop speakers are available on the conference’s website: www.eshaconference dubrovnik.com. The third day of the programme will be dedicated to helping delegates build links with peers from around Europe with the speed dating session and the round tables. The ESHA conference already has 300 registrations, so register soon if you are interested.

KeyCoNet’s Final Conference - SAVE THE DATE - 25-26 November 2014, Brussels

We are very pleased to announce that KeyCoNet’s Final Conference will take place on 25-26 November 2014 at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels. The Final Conference will present the network’s recommendations, with the intention of impacting on policy decisions made in the area of key competence development. The draft agenda and further information will be made available after the summer on Key-CoNet’s website, so remember to check there for the latest information and to save the date!
KeyCoMath – Developing Key Competences through Mathematics Education

Two associate members of KeyCoNet, the University of Bayreuth (DE) and the University of South Bohemia (CZ) are partners in the complimentary KeyCoMath project.

Key competences are necessary for all citizens for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability in a knowledge society. The European project “Developing Key Competences through Mathematics Education” (KeyCoMath) develops, implements, and evaluates ways of working according to the “European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” in mathematics education. Didactic concepts, teaching and learning material as well as corresponding assessment methods for mathematics education in primary and secondary schools are developed, tested, evaluated and disseminated at the European level. The cooperating partners pooling their expert knowledge are from eight European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland.

KeyCoMath uses the power of initial and in-service teacher education to put innovative pedagogical and didactical approaches into practice. Key elements of these activities include: scientific lectures on current results of didactical discussion connected with practical examples; the inclusion of pupils’ utterances and solution processes which demonstrate how children operate in a series of special lessons; the reciprocal ob-

For further information please consult the project’s website: http://KeyCoMath.eu

The MyCompass Project

MyCompass is a team of over 20 experts, from five European countries (Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal and Romania), all aiming at developing an innovative solution for the community involvement in juvenile offenders’ reintegration by using key competences as a common language for the youngsters and their teachers, from both inside and outside the juvenile justice system. MyCompass will host a conference taking place in Kaunas, Lithuania on 3 October 2014 and welcomes all professionals in education, juvenile justice, correctional services, social work and psychological guidance to join. The “open space” style conference will be built around a number of learning experiences moderated by members of the project team, where MyCompass will be used as a practical example.

For more details, please consult www.my-compass-project.eu and contact the team at contact@cpip.ro.
Elos – Education Stretching Borders

Elos defines learning outcomes for students in secondary education, describing the various dimensions that come into play when students (and citizens in general) participate in a Europe-related context. One of the instruments that has been developed is the Common Framework for Europe Competence, which applies to students at all levels of the education system. The Elos concept of Europe Competence includes international job orientation and entrepreneurial skills as well as foreign languages and European history. Thus, students in both vocational and academically oriented programmes of learning will benefit from the Elos competence concept. Elos also defines a quality standard for schools, describing the requirements for a school to be allowed to call itself an ‘Elos school’. Elos offers an international network of schools, sharing the same objectives. In all participating countries, there is a national network (and/or several regional networks) of Elos schools. All Elos schools have adopted both the framework for Europe Competence for students, and the Elos School standard. Find out more about the project and its final conference in Cologne, Germany on 26 September at http://www.europeesplatform.nl/eloseducation/.

KEYS Project

The KEYS project aims to valorise and promote the achievements from five Comenius multilateral completed projects aimed at the acquisition of key competences for Lifelong Learning and thus to provide support to teachers and school educators for the implementation of competence-based education congruent with the requirements of contemporary life. These projects (SUSTAIN, AQUEDUCT, KeyTTT, READIT, IdiaL) will be valorised through four National Interactive Seminars organized in Turkey, Bulgaria, Italy and in Belgium. KEYS partners intend to take a closer look at the methodology used in the products and outcomes resulting from these projects and to promote practices most suitable for successful competence based learning in larger context. In parallel to the experts’ analysis, the partners will collect feedback from the project target groups on the applicability, transferability and effectiveness of the methodologies from the perspective of the practitioners and in view of the today’s educational context. For more information, please consult the project’s website: http://www.keysproject.eu/

Sangakoo’s Online Classrooms

KeyConet’s Spanish associate member Sangakoo is proud to introduce you to its online classrooms available in English. Sangakoo can be understood as the extension of a daily classroom where teachers and students have a forum in which they can communicate with each other; students can practice, create, correct and comment class related exercises with each other; all of the students has access to the current syllabus and their individual progress; teachers can supervise and comment on the activities of their students.

The advantages of this model are, first of all, innovation: a creative and collaborative methodology facilitating personalized learning adapted to the requirements and methodologies of the 21st century. On the other hand, optimization: agile supervision from wherever one is. Third, flexibility: it can be used in class or at home; and, adaptability, as it can be adapted to the specific requirements of students.

Learn more and get involved at: http://www.sangakoo.com/en/online-classroom-maths
Evgenia Sendova, who represents KeyCoNet’s Bulgarian associate member within KeyCoNet, the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, shares below information about the international competence-based summer school, known as the Research Science Institute, for which she is a tutor.

To communicate verbally the meaning and the relevance of mathematics research to an audience larger than a few colleagues working in the same field is a competence which is difficult to acquire. How to present research projects in maths and science to specialists in the corresponding field as well as to peers who are working on a large spectrum of science topics, is part of my duties as a tutor in the Research Science Institute (RSI). This six-week summer program was launched 31 years ago by Admiral Rickover and Joann DiGennaro and is sponsored jointly by the Center for Excellence in Education, Virginia, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It is usually attended by more than 80 high school students, normally aged between 15 and 17, from about 20 countries from North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. The summer school begins with four days of formal classes in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics led by researchers who are RSI alumni. The students also attend evening lectures in science, philosophy, ethics, and humanities delivered by eminent researchers including Nobel Prize winners. The internships following the first week classes comprise the main component of the summer school. Once students have completed their internships, they present a paper summarizing their results and give an oral presentation in front of a large audience at the RSI Symposium.

Great importance is given to the need to capture the imagination of the audience while communicating mathematical concepts in a clear and understandable way. One example of a Bulgarian student who succeeded in doing this at last year’s summer school was Rumen Dangovski, who during his presentation put a sock over his shoe to demonstrate the notion of non-commutativity in an attractive way.

We, the tutors, direct our students to the general goal via a path traced by milestones (intermediate objectives). At each milestone, students are expected to have finished a concrete stage of the final product development and mastered specific skills and competences.

Traditional milestones for the written and oral presentation are:

- Presenting a mini-project using the same sample as the one for the final paper
- Gradual filling of the sample starting with the background of the project, the methods used, considering partial cases and possible generalizations; classifying the cases of failure, etc.
- Presenting the introductory part of their project in 3 minutes at a “posterless” session (with no props)
- Presenting their project in 5 minutes with any visual support they think appropriate

Working in such an inquiry based style naturally develops competences important not only in the life of professional scientists but also in those of citizens of the knowledge/creativity based society – planning, searching for and selecting appropriate information, integrating knowledge from different fields, and working in a team.
By passing along the milestones, the students build up a set of competences interwoven with predetermined objectives preparing them for their dynamic participation in society.

The good news from a national perspective is that a similar Institute (HSSI) for high school students (which focuses on mathematics, informatics and IT education) was launched in Bulgaria in 2000 and is functioning within the framework of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics and the Union of the Bulgarian Mathematicians. The Bulgarian participants in RSI are passing the torch to the younger scientists-to-be with the sense of a mission, thus developing yet another competence – that of mentoring.

For further information Research Science Institute Website: http://www.cee.org/research-science-institute.

A visual search experiment in the Visual Attention Lab, Harvard Medical School & Brigham and Women’s Hospital with the participation of the RSI 2014 student Marwa Jardali from Lebanon.
The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has recently released the 2013 results of its TALIS survey, an international perspective on teaching and learning. Run in 34 countries, the results of the TALIS survey are based on a sample of around 100,000 teachers in lower secondary education, randomly selected from over 6500 schools. TALIS asks a representative sample of teachers and schools in each country about their working conditions and the learning environments. TALIS aims to provide valid, timely and comparable information to help countries review and define policies for developing a high-quality teaching profession. It is an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to provide input into educational policy analysis and development in key areas. A Powerpoint presentation summarizing the key results within the report is available here: http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis-2013-results.htm.

The 2014 edition of the Horizon K-12 global report describes annual findings from the NMC Horizon Project, an ongoing research project designed to identify and describe emerging technologies likely to have an impact on teaching, learning, and creative inquiry. The report can be downloaded at http://go.nmc.org/2014-k12.

The Ministry of Education in France has published a new charter to achieve better curriculum coherence. The charter includes details of what is taught and assessed and how the curriculum is developed, evaluated and reviewed. For more information please consult: http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid78644/la-charter-des-programmes-adoptee-par-le-conseil-superieur-des-programmes.html

The Regional Ministry of Education of Andalusia has translated two documents concerning their competence-based work in relation to KeyCoNet: one report on their last session with the schools participating in PICBA and the other text focusing on the schools which have finished the pilot phase of using the assessment tool. The documents are available at the bottom of the following page: http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/nav/navegacion.jsp?perfil=&delegacion=&lista_canales=1374&vismenu=0,0,1,1,1,1,0,0,0
SPECIAL FOCUS:
THE MALTESE CORE CURRICULUM PROGRAMME
USING A COMPETENCE-BASED APPROACH TO HELP LOW ACHIEVERS

Following a presentation on the new Core Curriculum Programme (CCP) from our Maltese partner, Joanne Grima, representing the Ministry of Education and Employment at KeyCoNet’s 4th Network Meeting in Brussels in October 2013, the network decided it would be beneficial to host the next peer learning visit in Malta to follow the implementation of this recent curriculum reform. The Maltese peer learning visit started in the afternoon of Tuesday 29 April at the National Curriculum Centre of the Maltese Ministry of Education. The Network benefited from a welcome address by Mr. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment in Malta, as well as a more in-depth presentation of Malta’s CCP and a discussion with its three designers: Mr. Gaetano Bugeja (Assistant Director), Ms. Joanne Grima and Dr. Michelle Attard Tonna (Education Officers). A debriefing session followed in which various Education Officers responsible for the design and implementation of the CCP for particular subjects (specifically, Maltese, English, Maths, Science and Technology, Religion, and Italian) shared their experiences after this first year of implementation. On Wednesday 30 April the peer learning visit continued at St. Thomas College St. Lucia’s Girls Secondary School, which included an observation of a mentoring session taking place in the school’s Learning Zone, an illustration of project-based learning activities within the school, the opportunity to consult and discuss CCP students’ portfolios, as well as a final debriefing session including the experiences of Head/Assistant Head teachers, teachers, mentors, inclusion coordinators and other school staff regarding the implementation of the programme in their schools.

The CCP targets low achieving learners between the age of 13 and 16, who throughout the years have lost hope of experiencing any achievement at school. This has resulted in a lack of self-esteem and a strong belief in being incapable to learn. Often these learners also come from difficult economic situations and the majority have psychosocial problems. This often results in absenteeism. In order to support the learning of these children and to help prevent them from dropping out of the formal education system, the Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment has designed the Core Curriculum Programme, which was first introduced in September 2013. The aims of the CCP are to instil key competences in low achieving pupils aged between 13 and 16 at Level 1 of the European Qualifications Framework; give these learners their curricular entitlement despite their low ability; provide opportunities for their further education; and increase their employability potential.

CCP pupils are guided by a mentor in addition to their subject teachers. The mentor has 4 lessons per week dedicated to following the
progress of CCP learners, and ensuring their
general wellbeing. The mentor discusses with
the pupils (either individually or in small
groups) the progress made in relation to the
pre-set learning outcomes of the different
CCP subjects. In addition, the mentor and
pupils can discuss achievements, strengths
or the difficulties faced by the pupils, whether
emotional or academic. By doing so, the lear-
ners understand where they stand in their
learning process, what questions they need to
ask, where their strengths lie and what they
need to do to overcome their weaknesses.
This process develops the learning to learn
competence of pupils.

Up until now, the most heated debate sur-
rounding the CCP concerns the fact that
being part of a CCP group of learners means
being taught separately from the mainstream
for a number of subjects. It is clear that tea-
ching this small group of students together
gives them a much better opportunity to
learn, as they feel safe and comfortable with
other students at their level, and can bene-
fit from the teacher’s or mentor’s undivided
attention. However, on the other hand, there
is the argument that isolating these learners
from their peers is detrimental to their so-
cial development by excluding them from a
mixed ability natural environment. Schools
experimenting with the CCP for the first time
this year have been invited to explore diffe-
rent ways of delivering the CCP; some choo-
sing to allow this group of learners to attend
more mainstream classes than others. The
Ministry of Education and Employment has
allowed this flexibility in how the CCP is de-
livered in each school in order to learn from
this initial year of implementation, and to
establish what works best in order to further
develop the programme in the coming years.

Amongst the most challenging aspects of
this new curriculum reform, are the new
demands it puts on teachers in terms of im-
plementing new pedagogical and assessment
practices. In terms of pedagogy, a much
greater emphasis is put on pupil-centred and
authentic learning to engage pupils’ motiva-
tion. For example, in language learning this
means a greater focus on the functional use
of the language in real life contexts, while in
science and technology inquiry-based tech-
niques are used in order to encourage pupils
to experience hands-on activities and inves-
tigative thinking.

In terms of assessment, continuous, forma-
tive assessment is given priority in the CCP,
especially through the use of portfolios. The
pupils’ portfolios, as well as providing evi-
dence of students’ best work in a specific
subject area or multidisciplinary activity,
also include personal reflective statements
by pupils. These statements indicate pupil’s
own appraisal of their learning underlining
in which areas they feel they need improve-
ment. These self-reflective statements also
contribute to the development of pupils’ lear-
ning to learn competence.

The big question which all network partners
were left asking after this interesting peer
learning visit, was are such approaches only
applicable to low achievers or are they sound pedagogical methods which could benefit all learners? While competence-based education may seem to be especially suited to low achievers, today’s education research suggests that such constructivist, authentic and personalized approaches to learning are beneficial for all learners. The challenge for the future therefore, is for this paradigm shift to permeate the whole education system. In order for it to do so, we must be careful in not labelling or associating a competence-based approach as only suitable for low achieving learners. We look forward to monitoring the development of Malta’s CCP and to seeing what effect it eventually has on teaching and learning in mainstream education.

For a more in-depth discussion of the Core Curriculum Programme, we invite our readers to consult our newly published Maltese Peer Learning Visit Report, available on Key-CoNet’s website, as well as the forthcoming case study on this new curriculum reform, due to be published after the summer, in September.
KeyCoNet is very happy to inform our readers that the website’s project results page (http://keyconet.eun.org/project-results) has recently been redesigned so that the network’s outputs are displayed in a more user-friendly fashion. Moreover, we have introduced a separate page (http://keyconet.eun.org/search) which you can now access from the main menu on the homepage so that you can easily look for competence-based education initiatives and research at your leisure.
What can you do on the KeyCoNet website?

- **View the KeyCoNet introductory video** to find out more about KeyCoNet’s activities and members.

- **Subscribe to the KeyCoNet newsletter** and consult previous issues in the archive.

- **Access news on key competence development** from the latest issues of other relevant newsletters we link to, such as the Eurydice newsletter and the French Institute of Education’s bulletin, as well as recent reports by the European Commission, the OECD and other international and national organizations publishing on the topic.

- **Take advantage of the search tool** ([http://keyconet.eun.org/search](http://keyconet.eun.org/search)) which filters project results by country, competence, dimension, learning context, education level and the type of output available or search the whole website.

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Which project results can you find on the KeyCoNet website?

- **Two full literature reviews** on key competence development in school education in Europe and the assessment of key competences, and a summary incorporating the key results of both reviews.

- **An updated catalogue** offering a snapshot of key competence development initiatives in Europe.

- **Case notes** describing interesting initiatives at national level across Europe, related to the implementation of key competences at school.

- **Case studies** and accompanying videos developed from the most interesting case notes and drafted by researchers and policy analysts on the basis of a rigorous methodology.

- **A European mapping of initiatives** on the development of key competences, presenting an overview of the initiatives analysed in the case notes.

- **Country overviews** providing a global picture of the approach taken to key competence development and the state of progress in each of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

- **Reports on the network’s peer learning visits** to Malta, Dublin and Seville, with accompanying videos including interviews with the stakeholders of each curriculum reform.
Would you like to contribute to the work of KeyCoNet? Then check out how below! To contact us write to keyconet-info@eun.org.

- Apply for your organization to become an associate member of the network here: http://keyconet.eun.org/partners/associates

- Become a member of the KeyCoNet LinkedIn group! Would you like to exchange with peers and experts, and discuss the development of key competences in school education? Then join our KeyCoNet LinkedIn group! It is your chance to exchange directly with KeyCoNet’s partners and associate members across Europe on central issues related to key competences.

- Do you know about any news on key competence development which could be interesting to feature in the next issue of KeyCoNews? Let us know.

- Participate in KeyCoNet’s Final Conference to take place on 25-26 November 2014 at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.

- Check our website to see if one of KeyCoNet’s networking events is due to take place somewhere near you!

What are the benefits of becoming an Associate member?

- Opportunity to influence a new policy area of high interest to the European Commission and to have a say in the final recommendations on KCD which will help shape the EU’s and member states’ positioning on this issue;

- Opportunity to network with several leading policy/research/practice organisations across Europe that have a stake in KCD as well as to identify opportunities for future collaboration with them;

- Opportunity to join networking events or network meetings and to participate in any of the online activities and learning opportunities organised by the KeyCoNet network;

- Opportunity to gain a solid overview on the state of play of KCD in Europe rooted in sound evidence provided by KeyCoNet policy, research and practice partners;

- Opportunity to display the KeyCoNet logo on your website and dissemination materials to demonstrate your organization’s commitment to KCD.

There is no membership fee, nor any reporting duties; only a lot to benefit from!

So, join us (http://keyconet.eun.org/partners/associates) and become a part of our growing community on key competence development in school education in Europe.
FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR NETWORK’S PARTNERS:

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We are happy to hear whether you are interested in receiving further information or providing us with suggestions. Contact us at: keyconet-info@eun.org

European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 30 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet’s activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.
- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.
- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

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