KeyCoNet (2012 – 2014) is a European policy network focused on identifying and analyzing initiatives on the implementation of key competences in primary and secondary school education.

On the basis of the evidence collected through literature reviews, case studies, peer learning visits, country overviews, videos and exchanges between network members, the project’s final objective is to produce recommendations for policy and practice regarding the enablers and obstacles to a holistic implementation of key competence development.

Among KeyCoNet’s current 18 partners in 10 countries (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden), are Ministries of Education/related agencies, universities/research institutes, European organizations, and practice related partners. KeyCoNet also has a growing number of associate members from other countries and stakeholder groups, steadily increasing our network’s scope and influence.
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ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

Part of a series
This case study is part of a series of case studies being produced by KeyCoNet, to highlight various initiatives concerning key competence development, taking place across Europe. Each case study analyzes the initiative’s implementation strategies in depth, and will feed into the network’s recommendations for policy and practice on how to implement a key competence approach in schools most effectively.

How and why was this case selected?
Each year the KeyCoNet network identifies initiatives concerning key competence development across Europe, and a case note is produced providing basic information about each one. Following this, network partners participate in an online selection according to pre-established criteria, as well as an in-depth face-to-face discussion, in order to select the most interesting initiatives to develop into case studies.

The Norwegian case study analyses the Cultural Rucksack Programme; Norway’s national programme in which the cultural and educational sectors cooperate to provide young people throughout their school careers with opportunities to engage with various forms of artistic and cultural expressions delivered by professionals. This initiative was considered particularly interesting by the network because it was the only case identified which focuses on artistic and cultural expression. Moreover, as the programme has been running for 12 years, there are evaluations of the initiative available, and the stakeholders were able to provide valuable insights with regards to the obstacles and facilitators to its implementation. The case study highlights that while the programme has been very successful in giving access to high quality arts and cultural activities to all students across Norway (including to those who might not otherwise have this privilege), the challenge remains to ensure that it does not become just an extra-curricular activity, rather than an integral part of pupils’ learning.

Which methodology has been used?
Case studies are the main tool used by the network to probe beneath the surface of each selected initiative and provide a rich context for understanding the implementation issues involved. The initiatives selected by the network differ in many ways, according to the nature of the key competences addressed, the implementation process used, the number of students and teachers directly concerned, the type and number of actors involved, and the duration and stage of development etc. A multiple-case study design, whereby each initiative generates its own case study, but uses one single prism for a common analysis, was therefore chosen. This method makes it possible to explore diversity, as well as the enablers and obstacles to the initiative’s implementation, as perceived by the initiators and stakeholders interviewed. Moreover, through a multiple-case study design it is possible to identify choices, strategies, characteristics, situations or contexts leading to success or failure in a recurrent manner. This will particularly contribute to fuelling the set of recommendations for policy and practice at institutional, local, regional, national and European level, for the effective implementation of key competences in school education.

Each case study included interviews with the initiative’s coordinators and stakeholders, as well as desk research. In some cases, where considered feasible and fruitful, focus groups were also organized. This case study is based upon different methods. A substantial amount of white papers about the Cultural Rucksack are analysed and reported on. Moreover, two national evaluation of the programme, conducted in 2006 and 2011-2013 are referred to throughout the report. In addition, an hour long interview, with the head of the Cultural Rucksack Vera Michaelsen, was conducted during the last week of June. As a point of departure, the interview took the questions in the template for the KeyCoNet case studies. Additional information has been collected through e-mails and re-investigations of articles, reports and white papers.
## BASIC INFORMATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country:</th>
<th>Norway</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title of initiative:</strong>&lt;br&gt;[NO] Den kulturelle skolesekken&lt;br&gt;[EN] The Cultural Rucksack</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coordinator/Organization:</strong>&lt;br&gt;The secretariat for the scheme is the Arts Council Norway.&lt;br&gt;Contact: Vera Micaelsen, +47 21 04 58 39</td>
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<td><strong>Key competences addressed:</strong>&lt;br&gt;[NO] Å oppleve, gjøre seg kjent med og utvikle forståelse for profesjonell kunst- og kulturuttrykk av alle slag;&lt;br&gt;[EN] Cultural awareness and expression</td>
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<td><strong>Type of initiative and channels used for implementation</strong>&lt;br&gt;(e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)&lt;br&gt;National initiatives and activities connecting the cultural sector and schools.</td>
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<td><strong>Partners:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Research</td>
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<td><strong>School education levels:</strong>&lt;br&gt;(primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)</td>
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<td><strong>Target groups:</strong></td>
<td>Children and young people</td>
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<td><strong>Relevant links:</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Cultural Rucksack:&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://denkulturelleskolesekken.no/english/">http://denkulturelleskolesekken.no/english/</a></td>
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SUMMARY

The Cultural Rucksack (Den kulturelle skolesekken) is a national programme for art and culture provided by professionals in Norwegian schools. The programme helps school students to become acquainted with all kinds of professional art and cultural expressions.

The objectives of the programme are:

- To enable children and young people in primary and secondary school to enjoy artistic and cultural productions provided by professionals.
- To facilitate students’ access to a wide range of cultural expressions, so that they can become acquainted with and develop an understanding of culture in all its forms.
- To assist schools in integrating different forms of cultural expression with their own efforts to attain learning goals.

As a national initiative that targets cultural awareness and expression as a key competence, the Cultural Rucksack has been successful in initiating and creating activities that combine activities in the cultural sector with education. Still, there are several challenges in improving this as a key competence area within curricula and school focus areas, and to overcome the risk of the Cultural Rucksack becoming just an extra-curricular activity.

INTRODUCTION

Den kulturelle skolesekken (The Cultural Rucksack) programme is part of the Norwegian Government’s cultural and educational policy. It is a national programme in which the cultural and educational sectors cooperate to provide school pupils throughout the country with the opportunity to become acquainted with, understand and enjoy all forms of artistic and cultural expression at a professional level.

This initiative was established in 2001 by the Ministry of Culture with the aim of improving collaboration between the cultural and educational sectors. The national administrative office of the initiative is located in the national agency for the cultural sector, Kulturrådet (The Cultural Council). During the 1990s several initiatives had targeted the need for ensuring artistic awareness and expression among young people, and there was a general interest among policy makers and local authorities in providing artistic experiences for young people; for example the governmental document and initiative Broen og den blå hesten (The Bridge and the Blue Horse), (1995). These important initiatives led to a broader national agenda which the Ministry of Culture developed into the long term national program, ‘The Cultural Rucksack’. The objective was to combine different regional initiatives into a national initiative targeting the key competence of cultural awareness and expression.

Also in 2001, the Ministry of Education and Research provided funds for competence development connected to the same initiative, making it possible to launch initiatives and collaborative projects, linked to the national curriculum, between the cultural sector and schools.
sector and schools. From 2003 the initiative was further developed through national lottery funds targeting the cultural sector. The motivation for the project was to create experiences for young people throughout their schooling that reveal the interconnections between cultural expression and education, in order to raise their cultural awareness.

According to the report ‘A Cultural Rucksack for the Future’ (report no. 8, 2007-2008), the objectives and principles of the programme have to take into account the national curriculum established under the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2006), but the activities are not intended to be a substitute for the arts subjects taught at school. The programme is intended to be a unique, but at the same time self-evident, supplement to school activities. A further principle of the initiative is that there should be room for local and regional action, which will ensure local enthusiasm, activity and involvement.

This initiative has been important in creating a national development of ‘cultural awareness and expression’ among children and youth throughout their schooling. The aim is for all students to experience a broad range of forms of cultural and artistic expression as performed by artists themselves. In each region there is a committee that evaluates the requests from different artists to participate in the Cultural Rucksack; in particular, the committee assesses the quality and relevance of their descriptions and background. The regional office organises visits for artists of the schools in their region, promoting these tours with the artists in their regions, or displaying them on their website as an offer for which schools can make requests.

The intention of the initiative is to provide a counterweight to the commercial industry that young people meet through different media in their everyday lives. The main objectives of the programme are:

- To enable children and young people in primary and secondary schools to enjoy artistic and cultural productions provided by professionals.
- To facilitate students’ access to a wide range of cultural expression, so that they can become acquainted with and develop an understanding of culture in all its forms.
- To assist schools in integrating different forms of cultural expression with their own efforts to attain learning goals.
The initiative targets specific areas in the national curriculum and pupils at all levels of education have the opportunity to experience activities of cultural expression supported through the Cultural Rucksack. Professionals within performing arts, visual arts, music, film, literature and cultural heritage are creating initiatives and offering collaborations with schools. This initiative puts an emphasis on the practical involvement of students in cultural activities with professionals. This will then improve the cultural awareness of all students, both in school and in everyday life.

1. CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCE

Which contextual factors have been perceived as enablers to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

The Cultural Rucksack has been part of the Government’s cultural policy for primary and lower-secondary schools since 2001, and has recently been extended to upper-secondary schools. This means that all students from the ages of 6 to 19 will be able to benefit from the programme. The Cultural Rucksack offers cultural opportunities representing a wide variety of forms of cultural expression. The initiative has a holistic approach, covering a broad set of cultural fields and all levels of schooling. As such, the strong backing by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education has been an important enabler both in initiating the program and in ensuring its long term implementation throughout the country.

A unique and important enabler in this initiative was the decision by the Norwegian Government to use a portion of surplus lottery funds from the state-owned gaming company Norsk Tipping (Norwegian lottery) to support activities within the cultural sector, whereas in most other European countries, funds from national lotteries are channelled back into the sports sector. At present about 200 million kroners (€25 million) are made available for the Cultural Rucksack initiative each year. An important point is that the municipalities do not have to apply in order to receive funding. The national funds are provided according to a standard that ensure funds are made available to all municipalities; the municipalities then have to develop strategies regarding how to use the funds locally. This is a unique approach both in terms of other approaches in Norway and in other countries. The rationale
for this approach is that more people become involved than if the allocation of funding was based on individual applications and selections. The local authorities adapt the Cultural Rucksack to their needs and interests and select the artists that they want to engage in the initiative. This approach also means that, since they have received the funding, all municipalities are involved in the initiative, whether they have chosen to be or not, and therefore have to develop strategies and activities according to the initiative’s overall aims. Furthermore, the formal criteria established for the local plans were deliberately designed to be flexible in order not to exclude anyone for not having prepared an advanced plan. The aim here is also to avoid spending funds on writing and evaluating applications and plans, instead of allocating all the funds to activities at the local level.

Another enabler is the fact that a great majority of cultural institutions and a number of related institutions are involved in the content of the programme. These institutions, the regional authorities and many local authorities contribute substantial sums of money from their own budgets. In addition, local authorities and Rikskonsertene, a national organisation for bringing musical performances to local communities, provide funds that support the implementation of the Cultural Rucksack. Thus, an important aspect contributing to the success of the initiative is the long term commitment of funding. This has allowed the development of activities over time, considering that the initiative has been running for more than ten years.

Which contextual factors have been perceived as obstacles to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

Although the funding structure of the initiative has been a strong element in the success of the initiative, it could also prove to be an obstacle as the funding depends on gambling among the population. So far there have been no problems of reduced funding but this is an issue that may arise in the future. Funding for the initiative is not provided from state funds, but is based on people playing the national lottery.

The initiative has implications both on a national and a local level, since the funds are distributed to all 19 regions and most municipalities. Although there is a national secretariat (consisting of just two people) it is the regional administrative departments that are responsible for implementing the initiative and the overall aims. There is little control over defining how different projects are supported or the outcome of each activity.

The main obstacles to the implementation of the initiative are related to connecting the cultural and educational sectors at the local level; this is something that varies greatly in different municipalities. Research on the initiative shows that cooperation between artists and teachers does not always run smoothly and activities within the initiative can easily become merely an add-on or extra-curricular activity. Another obstacle is the diversity of the initiative across municipalities and levels of schooling, which makes it hard to assess the actual implementation and impact of the initiative (Christophersen & Breivik, 2013).
2. SUBSTANCE RELATED ISSUES

Which substance related issues have been the most difficult ones to fix when deciding on the content of the initiative, and why?

Defining and communicating the key competences

The organisational structure of the initiative has led to some issues as the roles of different stakeholders are not always clear. The most challenging aspect of developing the substance of the initiative has been ensuring cooperation between schools and the cultural sector in order to make the initiative an integral part of school activities. A White Paper in 2008 made some readjustments to the idea of the programme by making areas and responsibilities between the different organisation levels more specific and targeted. This White Paper, entitled ‘A Cultural Rucksack for the Future’, also addressed the tension between the cultural sector and the education sector in defining their involvement with the Cultural Rucksack, providing a clearer definition of responsibilities, with the main emphasis on the cultural sector.

The best examples nationally are the regions that have managed to make consistent plans that enable schools to build the activities into their curricula. In the Narvik municipality in the north of Norway, for example, a system has been developed in which during the school year all grade nine students visit a local museum where they meet ‘a truth witness’ who discusses his/her experiences in the city during the Second World War. Such systems are developed over several years, giving schools the time to integrate cultural activities into their curricula, since they know about such activities a long time in advance. The danger lies in making the activities too instrumentally attuned to the schools, therefore losing some of their unique artistic and cultural characteristics.

The diversity of the program is both a strength and a challenge, since the core substance is so varied. One consequence of this variation is that some municipalities, such as Sandefjord, become more systematic in their approach to integrate the project, connecting schools and cultural organisations to each other, while other municipalities have not managed to do this. By approaching the initiative in a more systematic way, municipalities can ensure that all pupils at a certain level are involved in such activities (e.g. visiting a library or watching a play in a theatre). The point of the initiative is that it is not established or developed by the teachers or the school, but is a service provided to the school by the cultural sector; furthermore, this service is provided for everybody and is not dependent on one teacher.

The debates that have arisen regarding the initiative over the last ten years have mainly been regarding whether it is primarily a school program or a cultural program, and opinions on the matter are still divided. The secretariat states that in their opinion, this is an issue that can best be solved on a local, rather than national level. This issue is also reflected in the way that the initiative is divided between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. One example of this is that at times new schools are built without plans for performance areas or stages to accommodate the Cultural Rucksack; in such cases one might ask how aware school authorities are about the existence of the Cultural Rucksack. Recent research also question how deeply this initiative is really embedded into school activities and curricula as a methodological approach.
3. PARTNERSHIP RELATED ISSUES

Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be particularly effective, and why?

This is a complex initiative that includes many different stakeholders, yet there is very little administration for such a national initiative, with a national secretariat consisting of only two people. The partnerships are organised by regional administration officers that are responsible for schools. The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education have clearly defined that the bulk of the funds should go directly to local artists and activities and not to the administration or skills development of staff. A diagram of the initiative’s partnerships was drawn up by Jorunn Spord Borgen (2011):

The local organisation of partnerships between artists and schools is developed through yearly plans with school visits, concerts and performances targeting different levels of schooling. As pointed by Spord Borgen: “the arts and culture presented to the pupils in schools are dependent on two factors: (1) the chosen norm for the distribution of funding from each county to the municipalities; and (2) the interests, qualifications, agendas and pedagogies of the individuals in charge of the various positions in the system” (2011, p. 376). As the model indicates, the interaction between these two factors provides the foundation for the arts and culture programmes to which the children have access in school.

There is a national network of people working in regional offices related to the Cultural Rucksack and each region has a network for its municipalities. Over the years these networks have increasingly established better working approaches as well as definitions of the quality and substance of activities. These networks have played an important role in the development of the initiative over time and they also create a very strong feeling of ownership of the initiative at the local level. Everybody feels that they have a vested interest in the initiative, and this sense of ownership is often expressed in the media coverage of different activities. Many of the decisions are made on local level and not on the national level. In many ways the national secretariat does serve as an advisory and coordination unit.
4. STRATEGY RELATED ISSUES

Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be particularly effective, and why?

Professor Anne Bamford made an external evaluation of the Cultural Rucksack for the period of October 2010 to April 2012. In her evaluation she wrote: “The cultural Rucksack is one of the largest programmes in the world that aims to bring professional arts and culture to children. It has been very successful at reaching all parts of the country, despite the obvious geographic and climatic challenges. (...) Children as cultural consumers and audiences is a concept that is taken very seriously in Norway, and artists who work with children are often of a high standard.”

However, Bamford also pointed towards the challenges in the program, paying particular attention to how cultural organisations could work more in-depth with schools and children, and not only sending the children to a wide range of events where pupils tend not to take an interest in the event. In addition, she suggested that: “The arts could play a much stronger role in the after-school (SFO) programmes as well as libraries, cultural centres, volunteer arts organisations, youth centres, and the broader cultural and creative industries could be brought into these discussions, as these groups tend to have good links with young people of all ages in the community” (Spord Borgen, 2011, p. 379).

5. MAINSTREAMING RELATED ISSUES

If the key competence initiative aims/aimed at mainstreaming, what are/have been the major obstacles encountered to generalise it?

Although the initiative has been successful in mainstreaming activities as part of school curricula, there is a challenge in defining the specific outcomes of the initiative. As of 2007, the initiative covers the whole of school education in Norway, from primary to upper secondary schools, and as such it is calculated that the total number of students participating in the initiative at any time is around 800,000.

6. SYSTEMIC ASPECTS

To which extent has the initiative been designed as a systemic one from the starting point, i.e. also introducing changes in several areas related to the student curriculum [such as teacher training, assessment, school organisation, etc.]?

The figure displayed in section 3 above (partnership-related issues) shows how the initiative has real impact on a systemic level on a national scale. Even though the initiative is a top-down strategy, the main bulk of the work is done at a local and regional level. In this way experience and competence are built from below, rather than as a top-down initiative. Regional cultural and education departments are responsible for coordinating the programme in
their own regions, and individual programmes are also designed by the municipalities. This assignment of responsibility to local authorities promotes enthusiasm and a sense of ownership among all parties involved and provides room for local variation.

Over the past decade, major policy changes have focused on increasing the quality and quantity of arts and cultural education in Norway. Despite the fact that there has been a reduction in the time allocated to arts subjects in schools, there has been a general belief among both politicians and practitioners that the climate for arts and culture has improved considerably over the past years.

7. Evaluation related issues

In case a simultaneous/real time evaluation process has been part of the initiative: What have been the obstacles to implement it, and why?

Monitoring has been carried out through a combination of large-scale national evaluations in 2006, 2010-2012 and 2013, combined with small-scale local initiatives to assess initiatives and progress. The main evaluations of the initiative have been set up by the Ministry of Culture along with various external research communities. An evaluation of the initiative carried out in 2006 (Borgen & Brandt) served as the framework for a report to the Parliament on further initiatives and developments of the Cultural Rucksack (2008).

The evaluation carried out by Spord Borgen and Brandt in 2006 found imbalances between educational and cultural agendas. Moreover, there was an underdeveloped bottom-up feedback from schools compared to the top-down structure in the organisation. In 2006, scarce statistics and a lack of evaluation tools showed the Cultural Rucksack initiative as an organisation with little focus on system development. However, the concepts of professionalism and artistic quality were highlighted. Pupils in a traditional audience role meeting traditional art, mediated by professional artists, seemed to be the most frequent programme element offered to the schools. The pupils would most frequently experience music (mostly concerts offered by the Norwegian Concert Institute) and cultural heritage (mostly field trips to local cultural heritage museums). The third most frequently offered art experiences were theatre/performing arts and visual arts. New art forms such as film and cross-over arts were scarce. The evaluation found that the county-based cultural offices were important gatekeepers for this repertoire, quality and funding systems. However the municipalities were also influenced by local individuals involved in the Rucksack organisation. A disparity between mandatory means and results in the schools was reported in the interviews. However, in the interview with the Secretariat conducted in relation to this report, it became clear, with reference to the new evaluation (Christophersen & Breivik, 2013) that in the last six years schools have become more conscious about the initiative and what it represents. This new evaluation points to the fact that this initiative is very complex, involving many groups and people with different interests, but also that it has had a major impact on a national level involving a large percentage of the student population. The main challenge remains the links between the school sector and the cultural sector, which have two different discourses and conceptions of aims, methods, outcomes, etc.
Moreover, the national secretariat expressed that because this is such a large-scale initiative it is difficult to evaluate the real impact of each of the activities or to what extent it has changed practice. An issue that is mentioned in the interview is that there has been little research on the effects and impact of the Cultural Rucksack. The secretariat has an overview of how many activities have taken place and how many people have been involved, but less information on the learning outcomes or personal engagements of those taking part in specific activities. It is also a general tendency in the field that there is little research on ‘artistic meetings’ such as those covered by the initiative or on what impact these might have. There are some indications of more informal outcomes, such as the increased number of visitors to museums due to this collaborative effort through which over the last ten years there have been more initiatives in museums for children and young people than previously.

8. ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIATIVE’S AIMS

Have the original aims of the initiative been achieved?

To a large extent the overall aims of the initiative have been achieved. However, it is very difficult to be exact about this as the initiative is so diverse and is implemented on such a large scale and also due to the fact that little research or evaluation has been carried out regarding the students themselves.

Moreover, the initiative facilitates about 58,000 artistic meetings between artists and students in schools during any one school year. This means that a number of artists can support their artistic activities through the economic support that they receive by being involved in the Cultural Rucksack; it is assumed that many of these artists would not have been able to continue their career without this support.

There is still a challenge in making people more aware of the initiative and its aims, particularly parents who know little about what the initiative really implies. Furthermore, awareness of the initiative in teacher training colleges needs to be improved.

9. NEXT STEPS

What is planned next for the initiative?

The initiative is currently in a period of redefining its priorities and orientation. The main aim is to focus on increasing schools’ involvement in the Cultural Rucksack. There is a need to bring the students’ perspective to the forefront, since evaluations have shown that they often conceive that this is ‘just’ an extra-curricular activity and not linked to more substantial matters of education. Both the secretariat and the evaluations point to the need for further research on the outcomes of the Cultural Rucksack on the local level, rather than on the systemic aspects, which are already well documented. There is great diversity in the content and form of the different activities offered. A systematic overview of projects, people and references carried out in 2013 by Kenneth Wangen shows that many students and artists are involved as are research communities and other actors on the local level.

The initiative will continue until 2015 when a re-evaluation of the use of the lottery funds will be made. This creates a more uncertain situation as the decision to increase or decrease funding will
depend on how much people play the lottery after 2015. The consequence of this could be a more uncertain situation for artists involved in the Cultural Rucksack, since they receive a substantial part of their salaries from this initiative. There are also plans to establish trans-disciplinary networks for artists, in order to build competence and experiences.

There is a constant focus on strengthening the initiative and improving various aspects. Currently, special attention is being given to student involvement, as documented in the recent research report (Christophersen & Breivik, 2013). The idea is not that students should take part in the artistic performances themselves, but that they should have more opportunity to express their points of view. It is important, particularly in an increasingly multicultural society like Norway, that the artistic and cultural experiences that students gain through the initiative are of relevance to their lives.

A final challenge is to create a balance between independence on the local level and commonalities on the national level. However, by looking into the county programmes in all the different counties in Norway, there seems to be a wide range of activities for schools to choose from. Although the programme is in Norwegian, we have copied a link to the programme in the capital here: http://www.dks.osloskolen.no/produksjoner

References:


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• Improve and raise the quality of education in Europe
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