

## CHAPTER 15

# Tracing the value of teacher education in EU teacher-related policies

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### ABSTRACT

During the past twenty years, an accelerating process of Europeanization of national policies related to teachers and teacher education has been witnessed, so that various policy initiatives have emerged at the level of the EU. The aim of this article is to examine how teacher education is defined and consolidated in EU teacher-related policies over time and what changes this implies for teacher education policy and practice in Europe. The analysis draws on document review of official EU policy documents, focusing on those developed after the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, when the EU formally adopted an education policy. Process tracing helped to analyze the data on chronological order, clustering the findings on distinct historical periods. The findings suggest that teacher education has received increasing value in EU policy discourse over time. The focus of EU policy cooperation in teacher education gradually shifted from cultural towards economic and employment priorities, in line with the developments of the EU's education and training agenda. Professional mobility remained a key priority for policy cooperation, but new trends emerged over time, with most prominent the continuum of teacher education, the development of teacher competence frameworks and the support to teacher educators.

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, education systems both within and outside Europe are confronted with new challenges caused by the acceleration of globalization. Since the 1990s, national governments have been trying to reform education in a quest for modernization, striving for constant change and improvement. Similar education reforms are being applied around the world in countries that are highly diverse in cultural and economic terms, giving rise to “global education policies” (Verger, Novelli, & Kosar-Altinyelken, 2012, p. 3), shaped by the interplay between transnational and national policy level processes. A pivotal role in this globalized context is played by supranational organizations, such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which influence national policies through international comparisons of education systems’ performance and policy advice.

The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one of the most prominent large-scale assessments that has had a significant influence within the context of education policy developments worldwide. By correlating student achievement to the quality of teachers and teaching, PISA and other international comparative studies brought teachers to the forefront of the global education policy agenda (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Tatto, 2007; Weidman, Jacob, & Casebeer, 2014) and many countries have striven to reform their teacher education systems in order to improve student performance (Murray, Swennen, & Kosnin, 2019; Tatto & Menter, 2019). This global reform wave is characterized by standardization, posing several challenges to teacher education, including the “primacy of policy” in terms of the politicization of teacher education and a new focus on the value and usefulness of teacher education (Trippestad, Swennen, & Werler, 2017, p. 9).

In Europe, the reform of teacher education is also influenced by mechanisms, processes and key agents of Europeanization, internal or external to the functioning of the EU (Symeonidis, 2018). The term Europeanization is hereby understood as a process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of both formal and informal rules that are first defined at the EU level and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse (Radaelli, 2004). Although teacher education systems are firmly rooted in national histories and conditions (Kotthoff & Denk, 2007), an accelerating process of Europeanization of national policies related to teachers and teacher education can be observed, particularly

since the launch of the EU's Lisbon Strategy in 2000 (EDiTE, 2014; Stéger, 2014; Vidović & Domović, 2013). The results of this process are convergences among European countries, such as the “universitization” of teacher education (Zgaga, 2013), the development of competence-oriented teacher education curricula (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018) and their orientation towards learning outcomes (Halász, 2017), as well as a lifelong learning approach regarding teacher quality (Nordin & Walhström, 2019; Stéger, 2014).

Against this background, the following research question is guiding this article: how is teacher education defined and consolidated in EU teacher-related policies and what changes this implies for teacher education reforms in Europe? Focusing on transnational policy discourses as one mechanism of Europeanization, the article attempts to understand the underlying values that are uploaded into the concept of teacher education. Previous studies have analyzed such policy discourses with regard to teacher quality (Nordin & Walhström, 2019) and teacher competence frameworks (Caena, 2014), but not specifically regarding teacher education. Empirically, the article gives an account of how teacher education developed as a term in the context of EU policy cooperation and reveals the main trends characterizing the European thinking in teacher education. It thus follows a chronological order starting from the signing of the Treaty of Rome, in 1957, up until 2018, focusing on the policies developed after the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, when the EU formally adopted an education policy.

## **THE EUROPEANIZATION OF (TEACHER) EDUCATION**

Teacher education became a field of policy cooperation between Member States in the broader context of EU policy cooperation in education and training. Education remained for many years outside the authority of the Union, because it was considered a sensitive topic for Member States aligned to the notions of citizenship and national identity. According to Pépin (2007, p. 130), “it took the Union 30 years (1976-2006) to design a coherent framework of cooperation for the fields of education and training.” It was only in the Lisbon European Council in 2000 that education became a key policy field for Community engagement in which the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was applied. The OMC is a form of intergovernmental policymaking that was originally created in the 1990s as part of employment policy, in order to spread best practices and lead to convergence towards the main EU goals (Council of the European Union,

2000). Under the OMC, the countries are evaluated by one another, in the form of peer pressure, with the role of the Commission being limited to surveillance.

However, the legal competence of the EU on Member States' education systems has traditionally been weak, because it is governed by the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, meaning that the EU can only intervene in a complementary way:

The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity. ("The Lisbon Treaty – Article 165", 2006)

Through the term "quality", the EU has discovered "an entrance to the education sector" (Alexiadou, 2007, p. 106), allowing the Commission to intervene in areas that were generally considered to be of national concern. Since 2000, the wider integration process through the OMC has intensified and formalized, resulting in the emergence of a European model of education with distinct features (Alexiadou, 2014). Dale (2009) argued that a "European Education Space" and a "European Education Policy" developed within particular historical, economic, political and educational contexts, which allowed education to find its "place" in European policy. The basic argument behind the idea of a distinct "European education" is that it must be somehow different from Member States' national education. Different in what it does, but also in how it does it.

However, the Lisbon agenda "does not acknowledge education as a 'teleological' policy area, an area in itself", but rather as "part of social policy, labor market policy and overall economic policy" (Gornitzka, 2005, p. 17). Similarly, Halász (2003) argued that the European interest on education originates from pressures of the wider social policy area, particularly the employment area. Since the middle of the nineties, various actors not belonging to the education sector succeeded in extending the scope of employment policies to cover aspects belonging to the education sector and uploading these to the community level (Halász, 2003). Thus, a number of social and employment policy-related interventions involve educational inputs and an increasing number of education policies are dealt within the framework of employment, leading some researchers to question how far European education can be considered a distinct sector in its own right (Dale, 2009).

With regard to the field of teacher education, Symeonidis (2018) has previously argued about the emergence of a European Teacher Education Area, governed by the following institutional mechanisms of Europeanization: (1) policy coordination, (2) cross-sectoral instruments, (3) evidence-based management, (4) the Bologna process, (5) educational programs, and (6) stakeholder pressure. By means of reciprocal interaction, the specific mechanisms produce significant effects on policy formation and implementation, transforming the strictly nation-bound conception of teacher education and resulting in a number of common trends across Europe. Rather than a strictly top-down process, Europeanization in teacher education is conceptualized as a reciprocal relationship between political negotiations at the domestic and the European level.

Specifically, policy coordination refers to the OMC working groups related to teacher professional development, as well as policy texts and presidencies focusing on aspects of teacher policy. Cross-sectoral instruments lead to the transfer of policies from one sector to another and help the Commission to launch policy initiatives in the sector where Member States are most receptive to them. In teacher education, relevant cross-sectoral instruments are the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), European structural and research funds, and the European semester. Evidence-based management refers to the knowledge produced by EU agencies and Europe-wide associations that inform the process of national policymaking. A significant impact on the structure of European teacher education has also occurred through the Bologna Process, which proposed a common restructuring of higher education systems, based on a two-cycle structure of bachelor and master degrees, in order to make them comparable and compatible. Educational programs, such as the Erasmus+, are also widely recognized as having an impact on teacher professional development. Finally, stakeholder pressure refers to the European social partners, international organizations and networks contributing to educational cooperation in the area of teacher education as mediators between European and national level processes.

## **METHODS**

This article was developed as an outcome of a doctoral dissertation on the topic of Europeanization in teacher education, conducted within the framework of the European Doctorate in Teacher Education (EDiTE). The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of European developments on teacher education

policies and practices in three European countries, namely Austria, Greece and Hungary. To this end, the first part of the analysis focused on process tracing of the EU policy cooperation in the field of teacher education. Data sources included EU policy documents, such as European Commission Communications and Council Conclusions, peer learning activity reports, policy handbooks and literature reviews with a consulting character, produced over the years and particularly after 2000. These documents were selected as relevant sources to examine the European thinking in teacher policy and teacher education, because they depict the policy decisions and recommendations provided by EU bodies to Member States.

Process tracing was employed to explore the development of EU policy cooperation in teacher education (George & Bennett, 2005; Vennesson, 2008). This method shares some basic features of historical explanation and uses qualitative data to expose causal mechanisms by providing a detailed description of the studied case. All documents were scanned inductively in order to trace references with regard to teachers and teacher education and help categorize the data according to distinct historical periods. The analysis process was assisted by the software MAXQDA that allows the user to organize and analyze a diverse range of data in a flexible and quick way. Specifically, after becoming familiar with the documents, MAXQDA was used to break the empirical material into units through theory guided and inductively developed categories. These categories were revised after twenty percent of the material and were eventually reduced to main categories. According to the research question, categories were formulated to depict the predominant way that teacher education is defined and consolidated into EU teacher-related policies over time.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

During the period between 1957 and 2000, European cooperation focused on economic issues and education was not formally recognized as a field of cooperation between Member States. Until 1971, cooperation was officially acknowledged only in the context of vocational education and training. Due to the absence of Community engagement in the field of education, there are almost no references to teachers and teacher education in official policy documents between 1957 and 1971. The 1963 Council Decision appears to be the only reference to the need for suitable training of teachers and instructors in

the field of vocational training. In 1971, cooperation in education started indirectly by adopting general guidelines for a Community action program, which was eventually approved in 1976. This program suggested that Member States should take into account a number of actions in order to improve the preparation of young people for work. Among other measures, the initial and continuing training of teachers received particular attention so that young people could be more effectively prepared for working life and for choosing alternative opportunities in employment, further education and training (Council of the European Communities, 1976, p. 2). The Council considered teacher training as a way to strengthen the links between education and employment.

Following the Gravier Case in 1985, when the European Court of Justice included higher education in Article 128 on vocational training, the European Commission used the new legal opportunities to launch first, in 1986, the Commett Programme, and right afterwards, in June 1987, the Erasmus Programme. Under this new umbrella framework that enabled teacher exchanges and mobility, teacher training received a new task, linked to the cultural aspect of education, that is, to introduce and promote the European dimension in education. Specifically, the 1988 Resolution of education ministers documented the commitment of Member States to make every effort to give greater emphasis to the European dimension in initial and in-service training, “within the limits of their own specific educational policies and structures” (Council of the European Communities, 1988, p. 5). The specific resolution triggered various non-governmental initiatives on teacher-training links, whilst the Commission was even authorized to organize a European Summer University which led to the *Réseau d’Institutions de Formation*, or network of teacher training institutions to promote the European dimension in teacher training.

With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and until 2000, the notion of lifelong learning redefined the purpose of educating teachers. The 1993 White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*, by Jacques Delors, promoted the idea that investing in knowledge through education and research is necessary for employment, competitiveness and social cohesion. The role of teachers is considered essential towards the new information era. Teachers and teacher training need to use new technologies, whilst universities can support this process by offering lifelong education, for example retraining primary and secondary school teachers (European Commission, 1993, p. 120). The 1995 White Paper *Towards the Learning Society* overcame the traditional division between education and

training and acknowledged the transformation that the teaching profession is undergoing as a result of technological advancements and the growing needs of a learning society (European Commission, 1995). New teaching approaches and innovation, validation of non-formal competences, second chance schools, recruitment of the “best teachers”, and mobility opportunities are the main recurring themes attached to the interests of lifelong learning. The growing significance of lifelong learning for a knowledge society was further promoted by choosing 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning and was given constitutional status with the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.

### **2000-2007: Linking teacher education to the quality of education and training in Europe**

The role of teacher education starts to receive a more prominent status with the signing of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000. At that time, a shift in the legal competences of the EU allowed for education to be officially recognized as part of cooperation among Member States. Education was linked to the goal of a knowledge economy and the term “teacher education” started to appear as a condition for improving the quality of education in Europe. In the Education and Training 2010 program, teacher education became the first objective for improving the quality and effectiveness of education. Specifically, “attracting and retaining qualified and motivated people in the teaching profession” was set as an overarching goal, whilst the need to receive general consensus within the Community regarding the skills that teachers must have was raised to a key policy issue (Council of the European Union, 2002, p. 7). Similar to other education policy areas, the European Council defined indicators for measuring progress and themes for exchanging experience, good practice, and peer review.

Following the recommendations of the Kok report in 2004 and the first progress report of the working group on teacher education in 2003, in a joint interim report, the Council and the Commission raised the issue of the competences and qualifications needed by teachers as a “matter of priority” (Council of the European Union & European Commission, 2004, p. 11). The specific report is important because it identified the teaching profession as one of the main change agents for the realization of the Lisbon objectives and promoted the idea of developing common European references and principles for teachers’ competences that could support national policies. The report also recognized that initial teacher education was not yet an integral part of the Bologna process



and the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, it proposed a strategy for developing indicators for the professional development of teachers, as a first step to link teacher education with the Bologna process (Council of the European Union & European Commission, 2004).

In 2005, the draft document *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* was adopted in a Brussels conference. The document linked the quality of education and training directly to the quality of teacher education, acknowledging that teachers are “key players in how education systems evolve and in the implementation of the reforms, which can make the European Union the highest performing knowledge-driven economy in the world by 2010” (European Commission, 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, it defined the following European principles for the teaching profession as an impetus for developing policies: a well-qualified profession, a profession within the context of lifelong learning, a mobile profession, and a profession based on partnership (European Commission, 2005, pp. 2-3). The recommendation document also specified “key-competences” which European teachers should acquire, meaning the abilities to “work with knowledge, technology and information”, “work with fellow human beings” and “work with and in society” (European Commission, 2005, pp. 3-4). These transversal and rather abstract competences leave room for interpretation and are underpinned by the lifelong learning paradigm of the Lisbon agenda. This means that teachers are expected to develop such competences throughout the continuum of their professional lives and that teachers’ qualifications should be integrated within the EQF.

### **2007-2010: Improving teacher education for better learning outcomes**

A growing interest with regard to teacher education and a stronger emphasis towards the notion of teacher quality supported by evidence can be observed in EU policy documents following the 2007 Communication on *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education*. This specific document connected the quality of teacher labor force to the students’ school performance, using evidence produced by educational experts and the OECD. During this period, a trend towards more evidence-based policymaking could be observed (Holdsworth, 2010, p. 45) and studies such as the 2005 OECD report and the 2007 Barber and Mourshed report shifted the perception of the role of school and teachers towards achieving high quality education outcomes (Vidović & Domović, 2014).

Individualized and autonomous learning, formative assessment, reflective practice, student outcomes, and competences were some of the recurring themes in the abovementioned studies, which received increasing relevance in European policy discourse from that point in time onwards. Several Member States were employing relevant practices that were made visible through the OMC working groups and in this way knowledge from Member States was uploaded to the European level. Specifically, through the 2007 Communication, European policy actors recognized that teacher education plays a crucial role for the quality of teaching, which in turn is key for the EU in order to “increase its competitiveness in the globalized world” (European Commission, 2007, p. 3). Teacher education is framed by the complex demands placed upon teachers in a constantly changing world in which students come from diverse backgrounds and have different levels of skills. Students are increasingly expected to become autonomous learners and have the responsibility for their own learning “by acquiring key skills” (European Commission, 2007, p. 4). These challenges were seen as hastening the need for a competence-based approach to teaching and a greater emphasis on learning outcomes (Council of the European Union, 2007). In this context, it became increasingly evident and accepted that initial teacher education is not enough to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for a lifetime of teaching.

Intertwined with the idea of lifelong learning, the education and professional development of teachers was seen as a lifelong learning task, which needs to be structured and funded accordingly, so that teachers can develop continuously. The continuum of teacher professional development started to appear as central in improving the quality of teacher education. Specifically, it was defined as “a seamless continuum of provision embracing initial teacher education, induction into the profession, and career-long continuing professional development that includes formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities” (European Commission, 2007, p. 12). In concrete policy suggestions, the continuum translated as follows: (a) teachers should take part in effective induction programs during the first three years in the profession, (b) have access to structured guidance and mentoring by experienced teachers or other professionals throughout their careers, and (c) take part in regular discussions regarding their professional development within the context of their institution’s development plan (European Commission, 2007, p. 13).

The Commission’s recommendations were endorsed by the Council which highlighted the need to take measures for improving teacher education at the

national level (Council of the European Union, 2007). The Council further requested that teachers hold a qualification from a higher education institution, receiving adequate balance between research-based studies and teaching practice, as well as between specialist subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 8). Member States were also asked to provide a “coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured” continuum of professional development for teachers, and to “consider the adoption of measures aimed at raising the level of qualifications and the degree of practical experience requirement for employment as a teacher” (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 8). As in previous Council Conclusions, suggestions were made towards partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools, teacher competences and professional mobility opportunities.

The continuing efforts of the Commission and the Council to promote policy cooperation in teacher education are evident in two Council Conclusions that followed the one in 2007. In 2008, the Council emphasized the need “to promote teaching as a profession and to improve initial and in-service training for teaching staff and school leaders” (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 4), as one out of three priorities for European cooperation on school education. Specifically, the Council invited Member States to focus cooperation on enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession, on enabling beginning teachers to benefit from early career support programs, on improving the supply, quality and take-up of continuing professional development (CPD) programs, on reviewing teacher recruitment, placement, retention and mobility policies, on expanding opportunities for professional mobility, and on improving the recruitment and training of school leaders (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 6).

In 2009, the Council reaffirmed that “the knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers, as well as the quality of school leadership, are the most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes” (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 4). Once again, the Council included teacher education within the context of lifelong learning, promoting the idea that “education and development of teachers should be a coherent continuum spanning initial teacher education (with a strong practical component), induction and continuing professional development” (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, the Council invited Member States to ensure that they attract and retain the best candidates for the teaching profession, make appropriate provision for induction programs

offering both personal and professional support, provide regular reviews of teachers' CPD needs, promote mobility programs, review the responsibility of school leaders towards shaping the teaching and learning and thus reducing their administrative workload, and ensure that high quality provision exists to develop teacher competences (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 7).

### **2010-2015: Teacher education in the context of effectiveness and efficiency**

Following the end of the Education and Training 2010 working period, and considering the fact that the EU's ambition to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy faced significant challenges, including the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007/2008, the Commission developed a new strategy in 2010 entitled "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth." This new strategy aimed at overcoming the structural weaknesses of Europe's economy, improving the competitiveness and productivity and establishing a sustainable social market economy.

Europe 2020 also implied a new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for the decade, namely Education and Training 2020. New instruments for policy coordination were employed and expanded to the field of education, such as the European semester which coordinates economic policies across the EU. According to Nordin (2014), this phase of Europeanising education in the wake of the crisis discourse is characterized by a parallel process in holding the European education policy space together. On the one hand, the use of numbers is strengthened, particularly through the use of the European semester, and on the other hand there is a reintroduction of a normative discourse around a common European identity represented by common cultural symbols and values (Nordin, 2014).

Within this context, the European Commission, in 2012, developed the Communication *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes* with the aim of reforming education systems across the EU in order to meet the growing demand for higher skill levels and to reduce unemployment. Specifically, the staff working document on *Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes* suggests to Member States to undertake policy action for improving the recruitment, initial education, induction and CPD of teachers, school leaders and teacher educators that are called teaching professions (European Commission, 2012). The Commission proposed ten key actions, five

for teachers and trainers, three for school leaders, and two for teacher educators to support the teaching professions in Europe. The reason for this policy action was considered to be a more effective and efficient use of public funds, given the importance of the teaching professions for learning outcomes (European Commission, 2012).

At the member state level, the actions proposed to support teachers and trainers are framed by the economic argument that investing in teaching staff is likely to bring biggest returns in terms of efficiency of education systems. Therefore, attracting, educating and retaining high-quality teachers means first of all to define the competences and qualities required of teachers. According to the Commission (2012, p. 60), “teaching competences are complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to effective action in situation, and thus are likely to resonate differently in different national contexts.” However, a shared understanding of teacher competence frameworks, based on teachers’ learning outcomes, is considered to be the necessary starting point for teacher education and professional development in Member States. Such frameworks of professional competences can be used as a basis for other education policies, whilst their multiple uses in teacher education, professional development, school development, teacher evaluation, and recruitment and selection processes, “can bring significant gains from more efficient investment” (European Commission, 2012, p. 61).

The second key action refers to redesigning recruitment systems to select the best candidates into teaching. This policy response is again addressed differently across Member States, but some aspects are held to be common, as for example the need to ensure that the number of teacher education graduates matches the demand of school population, as well as the existence of appropriate quality assurance measures and a competence framework (European Commission, 2012, p. 61). The Commission also prioritized here the importance of finding the right balance between job security and workforce flexibility, the salary levels, and the opportunity of mid-career professionals to enter the teaching profession. The same as in previous policy documents, two of the key actions to support teachers were a systematic induction support for beginning teachers and the opportunity for teachers to take part in CPD throughout their career.

Induction support should be delivered by way of a coherent program, meaning providing teachers with personal, social and professional support (European Commission, 2012, p. 62). The design and implementation of induction requires

a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders and involves all key actors, including teachers, school leaders, mentors, teacher educators, trade unions and policymakers. Moreover, induction should be the first part of teachers' career-long professional development, whilst regular provision of induction policies is necessary to ensure they are updated. With regard to CPD programs, these should be part of the overall school development plan and should be seen as an integral part of teacher activities (European Commission, 2012, p. 62). Here virtual mobility opportunities, such as the EU's eTwinning action or the European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe can be employed for in-service learning provision. Furthermore, a compulsory element for professional development in school development plans is considered important, as well as providing salary or allowance incentives to increase participation. Finally, the fifth key action suggests basing teacher development on regular feedback on their performance. This action is linked to CPD provision and competence frameworks, because feedback is seen as related to evaluation based on standards and implies support through professional development activities.

Moreover, with the 2012 Communication, the profession of teacher educators entered dynamically into the EU teacher education policy discourse, after intensive collaboration among experts which took place with PLAs in Iceland (2010) and in Brussels (2012). The European Commission went one step ahead of the Member States in raising the issue of support to teacher educators, a concept which arose in the European context and contributed significantly to member state policy (Stéger, 2014). Specifically, the Commission proposed two policy actions for the selection and professional development of those who educate teachers, namely to develop an explicit profile of the competences required by teacher educators, and to reinforce collaboration between all the key actors in all phases of teacher education (European Commission, 2012, p. 64).

The orientation towards effectiveness was also evident in the 2014 Council of the European Union *Conclusions on Effective Teacher Education*. The specific document conceptualizes teacher education as a continuum and suggests policies for the different phases. With regard to initial teacher education, the Council invited Member States to ensure that teacher education programs develop teachers' transversal competences, promote effective digital teaching and learning, and involve a broad range of stakeholders in the design phase of the programs. Once again, the development of comprehensive professional frameworks of teachers for the different stages of their career is promoted, whilst this time

the establishment of competence frameworks refers also to teacher educators (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 4).

The mid-term review of the Education and Training 2020 further strengthened the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of education systems in “raising the skill and competences of the workforce” (Council of the European Union & European Commission, 2015, p. 25) and identified six new priority areas for work until 2020. The fourth priority area refers to “strong support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other members of educational staff, who play a key role in ensuring the success of learners and in implementing education policy” (Council of the European Union & European Commission, 2015, p. 29). This priority area implies policy measures for improving teacher education towards the direction that previous policy documents have outlined.

### **2015-2018: Reinventing the European dimension of teaching**

In response to terrorist attacks in France and Denmark in early 2015, education ministers met in Paris to discuss how education and training can best meet the challenges of radicalization, resilience and citizenship. Social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue appear as urgent priorities, on which the ministers agreed to boost EU-level cooperation, offering the support of EU tools and the Erasmus+ programme. Among the six objectives formulated for strengthening policy action, there is one that refers to empowering teachers to stand against discrimination and racism, to educate their students in media literacy, to address the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds, and to convey common fundamental values (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 3).

The role of teachers and teacher education is further redirected towards promoting the European identity and the European dimension of teaching through two policy documents published in 2017 and 2018. The 2017 Communication on *Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture* strongly emphasized the need for professional mobility and cross-border cooperation, also using the opportunities provided by the eTwinning network and other virtual platforms. The role of teachers “in fostering international perspectives early in a young person’s life” (European Commission, 2017, p. 7) complements what the Commission up to this date defined as the quality of teachers and of teaching, which in previous Communications was predominantly related to the development of skills, competences and knowledge.

It is also worthwhile to mention that the 2017 Communication opened up the discussion of a European Education Area, to be established by 2025, building on various European initiatives and including the goal of “giving more support to teachers” (European Commission, 2017, p. 11). Setting up this vision is an indication that the Commission and Member States envisage reviving and strengthening the idea of social cohesion, which for many years was overlooked by the focus on economic and employment priorities. In 2018, the Commission moved in the same direction by proposing a *Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching*. The Commission suggests that Member States should support teachers to impart common values and deliver inclusive education through measures to promote active citizenship, exchanges and peer learning programs, as well as guidance and mentoring for teachers and academic staff (European Commission, 2018, p. 17).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this article was to examine the way that the value of teacher education is defined and consolidated in EU teacher-related policies, considering the changes this implies for teacher education reforms in Europe. The analysis of EU policy cooperation in the field of teacher education indicates the growing significance and value attached to the specific field over the years, resulting in what could be called European thinking and action in teacher education. Teacher education transformed European policy discourse over time and was influenced by social, cultural, political and economic changes taking place across Europe. Up to 1992, policy coordination started to be formally organized, mainly through the establishment of various programs fostering professional mobility and institutional partnerships. Between 1992 and 2000, it becomes evident that the role of teachers in European policy discourse is framed by the discovery of “knowledge” and the need to adapt to the new information era. Although the role of teachers and teacher education is scarcely mentioned in official policy documents, teachers’ contribution is considered important in transforming people’s knowledge and skills to promote a knowledge society.

The 2000 Lisbon Strategy signified a “transformation” for EU policy cooperation and the period until 2007 shows on one hand, the growing interest of European institutions to gain influence of teacher education in the Member States, and on the other hand, the growing interest of Member States to use European institutions to modernize their teacher education systems. Between



2007 and 2010, teacher education received particular attention within European institutions, following international evidence, which had proved a positive correlation between teacher quality and student in-school performance. This phase of Europeanization in teacher education is characterized by a shift towards evidence-based policymaking and teacher education practices are examined in relation to students' learning outcomes. Following the Education and Training 2020, teacher education was framed by the policy objectives of effectiveness and efficiency. This implies an ambition to ensure a better allocation of resources to achieve the best possible education outcomes, measured in terms of students' performance. From 2015 onwards, socio-political circumstances pushed the EU policy cooperation towards reinventing the European dimension in teacher education. Thus, a focus on fostering common European values and strengthening the European social model becomes apparent, whilst at the same time the influence of the Commission on teacher and teacher education policy increases through shifting priorities across sectors by employing the European semester.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the focus of EU policy cooperation in teacher education gradually shifted from cultural towards economic and employment priorities, in line with the developments of the EU's education and training agenda. This change of focus gave an impetus and led to the growth of European policies in teacher education, though redefining teacher education in terms of ensuring the global competitiveness of each member state's education system. Over the years, the goals of EU policy cooperation in the specific field became more precise, implying a hidden harmonizing discourse, as other studies on lifelong learning have also noted (Rasmussen, 2009). Although the Maastricht Treaty officially excluded harmonization, the strategy of intergovernmental coordination through the OMC and peer learning enabled a certain degree of convergence of objectives and activities. This convergence was strengthened by the stakeholders and mechanisms operating within the broader landscape of European teacher education (Symeonidis, 2018).

Professional mobility remained a key priority for policy cooperation in teacher education, but gradually new trends emerged as the result of reciprocal Europeanization. The analysis revealed that some of the trends defining the European thinking in teacher education include the recruitment and retention of the teaching profession, the development of teacher competence frameworks and profiles, the continuum of teacher professional development, including policies for the different phases of initial education, induction and professional

development, teacher quality assurance, and the focus on teacher educators. Such policy trends give rise to an educational “policyscape” (Carney, 2009) which implies the spread of policy ideas and teaching practices, in bits and pieces rather than as complete policy packages (Ball, 2016), across different systems.

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