

The teaching profession in European Union education policy¹

El perfil competencial docente en la política educativa de la Unión Europea

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Abstract

The teaching profession is constantly changing, and teachers require new competences to carry out their work in a dynamic and complex context. Moreover, the role of the European Union is becoming increasingly decisive in influencing education policies in each member state. For this reason, the aim of this research is to identify and analyze the most relevant regulations for teachers, in order to examine the teacher competence profile from a supranational perspective. To achieve this objective, we have carried out a qualitative content analysis of the documentation generated (communications, recommendations, exchanges of good practice, and working reports) from 2000 to 2021. The study has been organized around the three strategic programmes of the EU: Education and Training (ET) 2010, 2020, and 2030. The results highlight the growing interest in the topic of teaching in the European context and the progressive incorporation

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of tools and guides for designing teaching careers. The main conclusions point to the importance of competence frameworks as a crosscutting instrument for articulating teacher policies. These findings may have practical implications, since educational policymakers can use them for guidance and reflection.

Keywords: teaching profession, educational policy, teacher education career, European studies, teacher competences

Resumen

La profesión docente está en constante cambio y el profesorado requiere de nuevas competencias para desempeñar su trabajo en un contexto dinámico y complejo. Por otra parte, el papel que desempeña la Unión Europea (UE) está siendo cada vez más decisivo a la hora de influir en las políticas educativas de cada país. Por ello, esta investigación tiene como finalidad identificar la normativa más relevante sobre profesorado y analizarla para profundizar en el perfil competencial docente desde una perspectiva supranacional. Para alcanzar este objetivo se ha empleado un análisis de contenido cualitativo de la documentación generada por este organismo (comunicaciones, recomendaciones, intercambios de buenas prácticas e informes de trabajo) desde los años 2000 hasta el 2021. El estudio se ha organizado en torno a los tres programas estratégicos de Educación y Formación de la UE: ET2010, ET2020 y ET2030. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto el creciente interés sobre el perfil competencial docente en el contexto europeo y la progresiva incorporación de herramientas y guías para el diseño de la carrera profesional. Las principales conclusiones señalan la importancia que adquieren los marcos de competencias como instrumento transversal para articular las políticas de profesorado. Estos hallazgos pueden tener implicaciones en la práctica, pues pueden servir a los responsables en materia de política educativa como medio para la orientación y reflexión en torno a la carrera docente.

Palabras clave: profesión docente, política de la educación, formación de profesores, formación de profesores, estudios europeos, competencias docentes

Introduction

If we ask the question: what characteristics should define a (good) teacher? the answers will undoubtedly be influenced by the political and cultural heritage of each country or region, as well as the perspective

of each person. However, regardless of the positions taken, we believe that all would subscribe to the view that teacher qualities are key to achieving educational goals (Castro, 2021; Day, 2019). As a result, we are witnessing a renewed interest by international organizations and education systems around the world in the design of models, known as competence frameworks, which respond to the question raised above.

Thus, various international organizations report the need for education systems to design and implement these frameworks because they can serve as a tool for defining the teaching profile and the policies associated with the profession (Halász, 2019). As a supranational body, the European Union (EU) has also become more prominent as its proposals on education are accepted and implemented by the member states, even though this area is not yet the subject of a common European policy. Specifically, in recent years, the EU has been making interesting contributions to the generation of educational policies on teachers and their competences (Manso et al., 2019; Valle & Álvarez-López, 2020).

The definition of teaching competences and competence frameworks we adopt here is as follows: the first implies understanding teaching performance based on the dynamic integration of cognitive and metacognitive skills, to enable teachers to respond appropriately to complex educational demands in a given context (Halász, 2019). Likewise, we refer to competences within the classroom and the act of teaching, but we also incorporate a broader vision of the profession, which refers to performance in multiple contexts. The second term, competence frameworks, refers to a structure of descriptors about what “a teacher should know, understand and be able to do” (Eurydice, 2018, p. 78).

The importance of the role of the teaching profession in Europe began to emerge with the establishment of the Single European Act in 1986 (European Parliament, 1986). In 1987, a meeting of European education ministers discussed new challenges for teachers and teacher education, at which recommendations were made to promote a better self-image of teachers and their importance in society (Starida, 1993).

It should be noted that initial teacher education policies at that time were of a very specific and residual nature compared to other programmes. By way of example, we can mention the Arion, Erasmus, and Socrates programmes, created between the 1980s and 1990s. These modest actions were not targeted directly at teachers, but rather were a means to achieve broader objectives (Egido, 1996). Nevertheless, they

paved the way for what was to come later, as the number of documents referring to their profile, and in particular to teaching competences, has multiplied in recent years. The turning point was the so-called Lisbon Strategy (European Council, 2000), when the way was opened for a real education policy and interest in the teaching issue (García Aretio et al., 2009; Manso & Valle, 2013; Tiana, 2013). Since then, three education programmes have outlined the ten-year strategic objectives of the EU and its member countries in the field of education. Each of them makes specific contributions to teacher competences, but, despite their importance, they have yet to be sufficiently addressed in educational research.

Previous research mentions some of the main EU documents on the subject and situates the EU as an influential actor in teacher policy debates. For example, Stégel (2014) provides an overview of the main European concepts in this area (such as teacher competences, the continuous professional development process, and support for teacher educators), and convergence towards the Europeanization of the different member states is considered beneficial. Caena (2014) highlights the role of competence frameworks as a cohesive instrument for teacher policy, which makes the EU a catalyst for change by providing European education systems with the opportunity to carry out national reforms in the teaching profession through these frameworks and their various recommendations. Sánchez-Tarazaga (2016) summarizes some of the EU contributions to the design and implementation of teacher competence frameworks and compiles some of these frameworks with a list of the main desirable competences for teachers.

In the case of Spain, it is worrying that the need for in-depth reflection on professional teaching competences was not perceived until just under a decade ago. The Spanish Ministry's initiative on the proposed reform of the teaching profession (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2022), for example, points to the importance of addressing this issue.

Therefore, to shed light on this question, our work has three objectives:

- To identify the regulation of the teaching profession in EU education policy from 2000 to 2021 (Objective 1).
- To review and analyze European documentation on the teaching profession (Objective 2).
- To further the European perspective on the teacher competence profile and the EU's approach to professional competence frameworks (Objective 3).

The search for and location of documents produced by EU institutions on the teacher competence profile will provide a document base, from which to carry out analyses to discover the number of documents issued by year and type, and to study their content in greater depth. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the relevance and focus of competence frameworks within European education policy and a better understanding of EU guidelines on the teaching profession and its competence development.

Method

The research methodology is qualitative and descriptive. More specifically, qualitative content analysis (Saldaña, 2013) was used as a strategy within document analysis (López Noguero, 2002), allowing the content of the communications to be made explicit and systematized, in order for to logical deductions to be reached and the effects of the messages interpreted (Krippendorff, 2018). The phases followed are those proposed by Massot et al. (2012, p. 351):

- Tracing and listing of existing documents.
- Classification of identified documents.
- Selection of the most relevant documents for the purposes of the research.
- In-depth reading of the content of the selected documents, to extract elements for analysis and identify patterns, trends, and convergences that are being revealed.
- Cross-reading and comparative reading of the documents in question, to construct a comprehensive synthesis of the social reality analyzed.

The documentary sources used to carry out the study were primary and secondary EU sources. Following Matarranz's work (2017), we searched all the documents located on the corresponding official websites and digital libraries. Prior to analysis, the search and inclusion criteria were defined: 1) documents published in Spanish or English in official EU journals and by the Publications Office of the European Union; 2) documents issued in 2000–2021 (both years inclusive); 3) documents explicitly addressing the topics of teaching competences, teaching profile, and teaching staff.

After 587 documents were initially identified, 26 were chosen and those that did not meet the established criteria were excluded.

Results

European documentation on teachers and teacher competences

Once collected and reviewed, the documentation was classified into four groups: (1)² binding guidelines, (2)³ guidelines and/or recommendations, (3)⁴ exchange of data and/or good practices, (4)⁵ reports or working documents (Table I).

TABLE I. Documentation included in the analysis

Institution	Year	Document	1	2	3	4
European Commission	2001	Report from the Commission - The concrete future objectives of education systems		X		
European Commission	2005	Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications			X	
European Council	2006	Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning		X		
European Commission	2007	Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - Improving the Quality of Teacher Education				X
European Council	2009a	Council conclusions of 26 November 2009 on the professional development of teachers and school leaders		X		
European Council	2009b	Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)		X		
European Commission	2011a	Literature review Teachers' core competences: requirements and development			X	
European Commission	2011b	Policy approaches to defining and describing teacher competences				X
European Commission	2012a	Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes				X

2 Regulations, directives, and decisions.

3 Recommendations, opinions, resolutions, statements, and concluding documents.

4 Publications and notifications of an educational and informative nature.

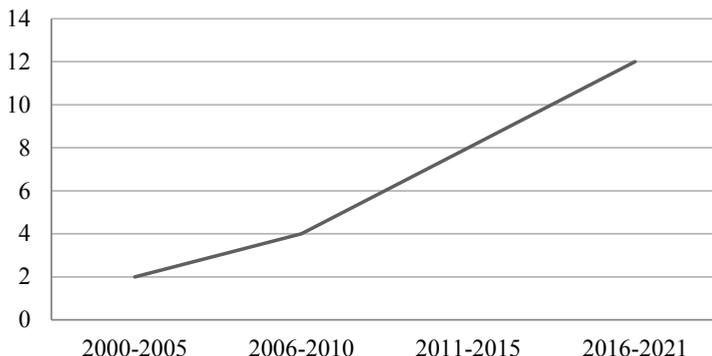
5 Reflective reports and communications.

European Commission	2012b	Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes			X	
European Commission	2013	Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes				X
European Parliament and European Council	2013	Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport (...)		X		
European Council	2014	Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education		X		
European Council and European Commission	2015	Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)			X	
European Commission	2017	Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture				X
European Commission	2018	Boosting teacher quality: Pathways to effective policies				X
European Council	2018a	Council conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area		X		
European Council	2018b	Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning		X		
European Commission	2019	Teaching Careers in Europe: Access, Progression and Support				X
European Commission	2020a	Supporting teacher and school leader careers				X
European Commission	2020b	On achieving the European Education Area by 2025				X
European Council	2020a	Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future		X		
European Council	2020b	Council conclusions on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training		X		
European Council	2020c	Council recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience		X		
European Council	2021	Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)		X		
European Parliament and European Council	2021	Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport (...)		X		

Source: compiled by author

For the period 2000–2021, we found a total of 26 texts that address issues related to teachers and their competences. Figure I also shows a clear and progressive increase in the number of documents dealing with these issues.

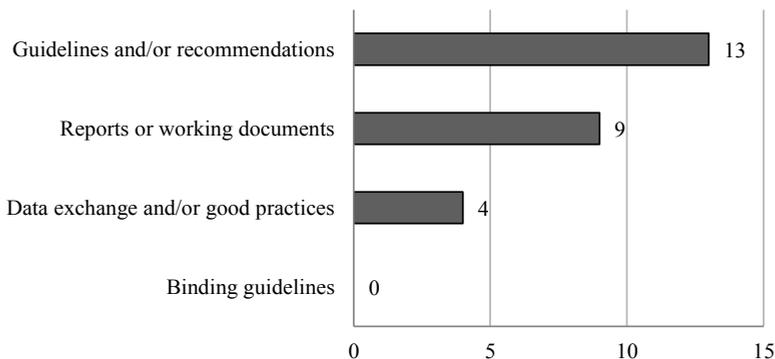
FIGURE I. Documents issued by the EU referring to teaching staff and teaching competences over time (2000–2021)



Source: compiled by author

We also note that most documents issued by the EU in this area are grouped around type (2) (guidelines and/or recommendations) and type (4) (reports or working documents) documents (Figure II).

FIGURE II. Documents issued by the EU concerning teaching staff and teaching competences according to typology (2000–2021)



Source: compiled by author

The teacher competence profile from the European perspective

ET 2010 programme and the teaching profession

The Working Strategies for 2000–2010 (hereafter, ET 2010) set out three general objectives for education systems, which are broken down into thirteen associated objectives (European Commission, 2001). The first to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU describes as one of its specific aims to improve the education and training of teachers and educators. The text considers the need to strengthen the teaching profession by improving and adapting knowledge and skills to the new social context. Thus, according to ET 2010, the role of teachers is crucial to ensure that students acquire the skills required by society and the world of work.

As a result of this work, there appears to be a growing evolution of education policies, including teacher training (Manso & Valle, 2013). In 2002, a working group of experts was set up within the framework of the Barcelona European Council (European Council, 2002), to work on improving teacher education, with representatives from the countries participating in ET 2010.

In this context, and a few years later, the report *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (European Commission, 2005) was published. As its name suggests, the report outlines the principles that should guide teacher competences and profiles. It is one of the most significant contributions in this field and in the context of European guidelines. These principles should serve to leverage policies to improve the efficiency and quality of education in the EU and to achieve a teaching profession in Europe based on: (1) high qualifications, which involve broad knowledge and competence development, (2) lifelong learning, continuing training throughout professional development, (3) mobility, through participation in European projects, and (4) collaborative work with other agents in the educational community. Alongside these common principles, the EU proposes three areas in which teachers in the member states should be able to evolve: (a) working with others, (b) working with knowledge, technology, and information, and (c) working with and in society (European Commission, 2005).

From these principles, we can deduce that not all the necessary competences can be expected to be achieved during the period of initial teacher training education. However, as suggested by European experts, they will need to be developed during the induction stage and in-service training.

In addition to guiding the broadening of competences in continuing professional development, the EU encourages teachers to have a reflective and active attitude towards their own learning and to adopt greater responsibility in their training and the development of competences required for their work. Within the framework of this group of European experts, we highlight the communication entitled *Improving the quality of teacher education* (European Commission, 2007), in which teaching and teacher education are seen as key elements in guaranteeing teaching quality and improving young people's achievements in school. It also shows that changes in society and education place fluctuating demands on teachers: imparting basic knowledge, helping young people to acquire key competences, developing collaborative and constructive approaches to learning, acting as classroom managers, educating in heterogeneous classrooms, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new technologies, or assuming tasks related to internal school management. These changes require teachers to acquire competences in their initial and continuing education:

To equip the teaching body with skills and competences for its new roles, it is necessary to have both high-quality initial teacher education and a coherent process of continuous professional development keeping teachers up to date with the skills required in the knowledge based society (European Commission, 2007, p. 5).

The European Commission also expresses its concern about training systems, stating that they are not conducive to developing the competences needed in 21st century society. In this respect, and on the basis of the Common European Principles set out above (European Commission, 2005), the Commission suggests a series of policy orientations and measures to improve the quality of teacher preparation in the EU aligned around six areas: (1) lifelong learning, (2) the development of pedagogical attitudes and skills, (3) the implementation of policies requiring higher level qualifications for entry into the profession, (4) reflective teaching

practice and research interest, (5) improvement of teacher educator qualifications, and (6) the need for teachers to cater for and embrace the cultural diversity in which we live.

The ET 2020 programme and “Rethinking education”

The Council meeting of 12 May 2009 established the continuity of the ET 2010 programme by means of the Working Strategies 2010–2020 (hereinafter, ET 2020), which would therefore mark the entire EU education policy strategy for the decade (Valle, 2012; Matarranz, 2017). This new framework updates some of the objectives defined in the previous stage and incorporates new ones. The second of these states that the main challenge should be to ensure that all individuals achieve key competences. It also makes the following reference to teachers: “there is a need to ensure high quality teaching, to provide adequate initial teacher education, continuous professional development for teachers and trainers, and to make teaching an attractive career-choice” (Council of Europe, 2009b, p. 3).

To ensure the proper implementation of ET 2020, the EU again relied on working groups made up of experts from the different member states. A specific group was set up to deal with the teaching profession. This group studied aspects such as the development of teachers’ competences, their professional development, or the policies that regulate their work. Of particular interest is the document issued by this committee entitled *Policy approaches to defining and describing teacher competences* (European Commission, 2011b), which is responsible for studying approaches to defining teacher competences in all EU countries. Its purpose was to draw comparisons between member states’ policies and offer recommendations to help them expand their education policies regarding a possible competence framework for teachers—quite a novelty.

It was in this context that the European Commission decided to launch, at the end of 2012, *Rethinking Education* (European Commission, 2012a), with the aim of ensuring that by 2020 new teaching and learning methods would be introduced in education systems to equip students with appropriate qualifications for employment. The proposal was to reform education systems across the EU in ways that responded to the

growing demand for higher skill levels and to reduce unemployment. In this sense, the reforms were aimed at optimizing basic skills levels, boosting training, enhancing entrepreneurial skills, and improving language competences. The document identified a limited set of strategic priorities to be addressed by member states, together with a series of recommendations, including one for European teachers:

Teachers now face unprecedented challenges (...): the increasing requirements of education, the massive retirement of teachers from the baby-boom generation and severe staff shortages in some subject areas will result in an increased demand for qualified educators at all levels and call for comprehensive actions to boost the attractiveness of the profession. These should include both financial and non-financial incentives (p. 10).

This question demands new competences of the teaching profession. Member states are therefore called upon to define a competence framework or professional profile for teachers. The report considered it essential to review and consolidate the professional profile of all teaching professions through the following actions:

(...) revise and strengthen the professional profile of all teaching professions (teachers at all levels, school leaders, teacher educators). Key actions are reviewing the effectiveness as well as the academic and pedagogical quality of Initial Teacher Education, introducing coherent and adequately resourced systems for recruitment, selection, induction and professional development of teaching staff based on clearly defined competences needed at each stage of a teaching career, and increasing teacher digital competence (European Commission, 2012a, p. 15).

It also urges decisive action to support new approaches to teaching and learning, with a stronger focus on the work environment, in partnership with other organisations. The above-mentioned communication (European Commission, 2012a) is accompanied by five other working documents providing evidence of initiatives and good practice, one of which is *Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes* (European Commission, 2012b). This report devotes a section

to teaching competences. It states that teachers should have several specific competences, including key competences. Furthermore, the report insists on the idea that teachers should not only help students to develop the skills that are easier to assess but should also foster higher order cognitive skills (problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, etc.). In the last chapter, it pinpoints some keys to support the teaching profession (European Commission, 2012b) of which we highlight the following:

- Define the competences and qualities required of teachers.
- Redesign recruitment systems to select the best teachers.
- Ensure an induction period for new teachers.
- Provide feedback to teachers on their performance for professional development and improvement.

A subsequent study entitled *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* (European Commission, 2013) deals in depth and exclusively with the topic of teacher competence, with the aim of identifying the key features of successful teacher competence policies and providing practical examples. Areas covered include the meaning of teaching competences, the benefits of competence frameworks, examples of policies used by some European countries, guidelines for developing and assessing teaching competences, and guidelines for encouraging teachers to develop these competences further.

We also highlight the contribution entitled *Boosting teaching quality: Pathways to effective policies* (European Commission, 2018). Focusing on student learning, this study provides evidence of effective and efficient teacher policies. The focus on these two variables is important in the current context, given the increasing demands on teaching functions, as well as budgetary constraints on education spending. The major contribution of this report is the proposal of a tool, in the form of a four-stage policy matrix (Figure III), to assist policymakers in designing, analyzing, and implementing long-term teacher-related strategies.

FIGURE III. Four-stage policy matrix



Source: compiled by author based on European Commission (2018)

The report analyses and develops eight policy measures that constitute the pillars on which teacher education policies should be based, to achieve higher quality teaching. These measures form a policy mix for the teaching profession. Those that have an impact on teaching quality, and ultimately on student outcomes have been selected, although measuring these variables empirically has been acknowledged as a real challenge. These measures are divided into two areas, as shown in Table II.

TABLE II. Policy measures to support teacher quality

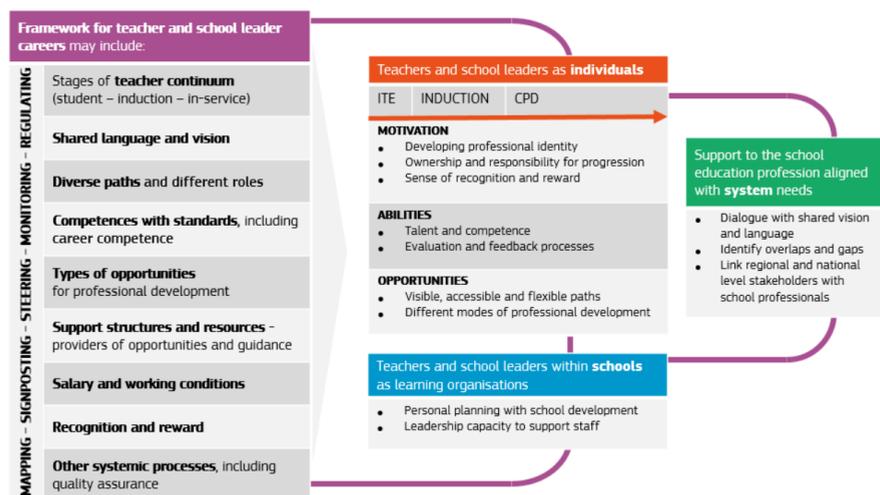
Transversal measures
The definition and use of professional competence frameworks
The use of (monetary and non-monetary) incentives
Targeted measures
The use of tools for recruitment and deployment of high quality teachers
The provision of teacher education, induction support, and professional development
Support for schools as learning organizations, teacher leadership, and teacher networks
The use of teacher evaluation and other human resource management tools
The provision of tools, guidelines, and research to support teaching quality
Measures to improve the social status, prestige, and attractiveness of the teaching professional

Source: European Commission (2018)

More recently, the European Commission (2020a) published a new policy-oriented paper entitled *Supporting teacher and school leader careers*, which focuses on the career progression of teachers and school leaders. The document addresses how competence frameworks can support teachers in their career progression (Figure IV). This is

an interesting contribution since, as Snoek et al. (2019) note, many competence frameworks in Europe are limited by their static view.

FIGURE IV. Framework to design teacher careers.



Source: European Commission (2020a)

According to this publication, some of the most outstanding aspects for creating teaching competence frameworks are as follows:

- provide conditions of support for teachers at individual, school, and education system level,
- pay attention to all phases of teacher professional development (initial training, entry into the profession, and continuing professional development),
- promote motivation to develop competence through recognition and reward criteria,
- incorporate clear guidance and opportunities for career progression,
- provide professional development opportunities,
- ensure visibility of the different career paths available to teachers, and
- progressively abandon traditional approaches that view careers as flat or hierarchical.

In this effort to recognize different possibilities for professional development in teaching, different paths are proposed that entail a change in role, including assuming responsibility in the management team, specializing in a teaching area, coordinating school projects, changing schools or stages, collaborating in designing the curriculum with the administration, or working in educational research. All this should be reflected in competence frameworks and higher salaries.

ET 2030 Programme and the European Education Area

In 2020, the second strategic programme came to an end, but the EU continued to work on education. A new strategic document marked the start of the decade, providing a guide towards the achievement of a European Education Area by 2030 (European Council, 2021). Like its predecessors, the new ET 2030 strategic framework establishes priorities that will set the direction for the decade. Strategic priority 3 aims to improve competences and motivation in the educating profession:

Explore the possibility of developing policy tools in a form of teacher competence frameworks to increase relevance of initial teacher education programmes as well as development of continuous professional development opportunities and to provide guidance for teachers in their career progression (European Council, 2021, p. 19).

This strategic priority underlines the need to pay attention to teacher well-being, to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, and to reassess the role of educational leadership. In addition, twelve specific actions are proposed to improve teachers' competences and motivation (Table III).

TABLE III. Specific actions for priority area 3, ET 2030

<p>PRIORITY AREA NO.3</p> <p>TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS</p>	Increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession
	Revalorize teaching profession (economic and social)
	Create competence frameworks
	Develop digital competences
	Create European Teacher Academies
	Support the promotion of excellence in teaching at all levels
	Support linguistic and cultural diversity
	Promote teachers' mobility
	Improve teachers' working conditions
	Reduce gender imbalances in education and training-related professions
	Promote competency-based teacher training programmes

Source: compiled by author

In addition, a novel initiative was launched: European Teachers Academies, to be implemented through the Erasmus+ programme (2021, L98, 1) and aimed at facilitating networking, knowledge sharing, and mobility between institutions, providing Europe-wide learning opportunities at all stages of professional teaching life, exchange of best practice, and innovative pedagogies.

Discussion and Conclusions

Teacher competence frameworks are a tool for teacher professional development (Amor & Serrano, 2019) and are therefore essential in the educational context of any European institution. Moreover, the role played by the EU as a supranational body is increasingly decisive in influencing the policies of each country (Egido et al., 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to identify EU documentation on teacher profiles and competences and to analyze its content to understand the EU guidelines on the teaching profession and competence development. In this section, we will report the main findings of the study and will

follow with a final discussion on the use of competence frameworks as a tool for designing teaching careers.

Since the ET 2010 programme was established, the EU has wanted to ensure that education systems have well-trained and appropriately skilled teachers. This research has indicated that interest in teaching has increased in recent years and the EU continues to establish itself as a key player in the public agenda, as previous studies have shown (Caena, 2014; Stégel, 2014).

But in addition to its importance, we also report another indicator: attention to detail. We are witnessing a progressive effort by the EU to outline the configuration of the teaching profile, not so much in terms of content (i.e. with a specific list of features and functions of the profession), as recounted in a previous work (Sánchez-Tarazaga, 2016), but in terms of developing tools to facilitate implementation, such as the four-step matrix (European Commission, 2018), or the guide to professional career design (European Commission, 2020a). The question that would then arise is why the EU has decided to opt for this more instrumental vision rather than agree on the basic contents of that competence framework. We believe there are two main reasons that could answer this question and will address them below.

The first reason may be due to the complexity of implementing teacher policies. In this regard, we would highlight the potential of designing a tool as a crosscutting measure to coherently integrate other teacher policies (Halász, 2019). Indeed, in both the matrix presented (European Commission, 2018) and the most recent guide (European Commission, 2020a), teacher competence frameworks are fully functional and can connect each area of policies aimed at improving teacher quality (recruitment, training, teacher evaluation) to guide teachers' careers. This approach can clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the teaching profession, as well as support processes of self-reflection and dialogue on career development (European Commission, 2020a).

The second reason for this more instrumental approach has to do with the diverse nature of this profession. While competence frameworks make it possible to identify the features common to teaching, competences must be developed according to the specific context in which the educational act takes place. Under this approach, there is no single best way, or type, of working as a teacher. Rather, there are different effective pedagogical approaches, depending on the profile and preferences of the teacher, the

teaching context (the school's value system, leadership style, teamwork culture, etc.) and the type of learners (European Commission, 2018). Therefore, we need to recognize their contextual nature and understand each school as a local unit when designing and implementing teacher-related policies, including the use of teacher competence frameworks (European Commission, 2013). Thus, in our opinion, we can agree that the starting point should be 'glocal' designs of competence frameworks, according to the motto *think globally, act locally*. That is, by respecting the singularities of each educational centre, which will be required to take on the task of specifying and monitoring them.

Furthermore, professional competence frameworks should not only be based on an analysis of teachers' work, but also on a social dialogue about their roles, in a way that clearly states what is expected of each teacher and reflects future expectations (European Commission, 2020a). It is therefore desirable that this process involve teaching teams and other stakeholders in the education community to ensure that a wide range of views are represented, thereby strengthening definitions and acceptance of the resulting framework (Snoek et al., 2019). We also find the EU's participatory approach interesting in that it urges countries to allow specialized professionals to develop specific frameworks so as to ensure that users can fully adapt and understand them.

Despite the emphasis on the contextualized nature of professional frameworks, the trends of teaching competences that require greater attention in order to respond to the challenges posed at any given time should not be ignored. For example, in some of its communications, the Council of Europe recommends that governments seek to promote competences that are particularly relevant today, such as working in multilingual and multicultural environments, working with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs, sustainable development, and digital pedagogies (Council of Europe, 2020a, b).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of the study. Other noteworthy contributions from the EU, such as the Eurydice reports or the monographs devoted to the professional profile and competences of teacher educators, have not been addressed here. We invite you to incorporate this limitation in future research, as its detailed study will enrich and complete the conclusions of this work. Likewise, the volume of documentation on the subject and limitations of length have resulted in this review focusing on a descriptive qualitative approach, albeit from

a reflective perspective, especially in the final section of the discussion and conclusions.

In the light of these considerations, this work may constitute pioneering exploratory research whose main contribution is the systematic compilation of documentation and identification of the most relevant EU proposals on the teaching profile and professional competence frameworks. However, now that the discourse on their presence and importance in European education policy has been communicated, it is time to put them in practice. Experience shows that designing and implementing competence frameworks are tools that have already been used to influence education policy (Halász, 2019). We therefore hope that the issues raised here can stimulate reflection on the importance of competence frameworks, especially by policymakers at national, regional, and institutional level.

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