

Brussels, 10 November 2005

Lifelong learning and key competences for all: vital contributions to prosperity and social cohesion

A Communication approved by the Commission today concludes that Member States must accelerate the pace of reform in their education and training systems, or large proportions of the next generation will face social exclusion. The matter is urgent: despite the important efforts made by all Member States, there is too little progress against the European “benchmarks” fixed for improving young people’s qualifications and competences. This has serious consequences for all citizens, especially for disadvantaged groups, and the 80 million or so low-skilled workers across Europe, and for the wider economy as a whole in terms of competitiveness and job creation. The Commission today also approved a proposal to establish a European Framework for Key Competences – a practical reference tool to support Member States’ efforts.

Ján Figel’, European Commissioner in charge of Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism said on this occasion: “National reforms are going in the right direction. Results are mixed, however, and more efforts are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the European social model. Levels of public and private investment in education and training are still insufficient to accomplish the necessary reforms and to contribute to the Lisbon strategy of growth and jobs”.

In the Communication on “Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe” adopted today, the Commission presents its contribution to the 2006 Joint Progress Report on the implementation of the “Education and Training 2010” work programme to be jointly agreed with the Council in February 2006. This Work Programme is the education and training strand of the Lisbon strategy and aims to modernise Europe’s education and training systems. The Communication notes that, although lifelong learning is gaining ground in Europe, **too few adults are participating in lifelong learning** and national strategies should urgently be implemented in all countries. The EU benchmark on increasing the number of maths, science and technology graduates has been achieved, but we are still a long way from achieving those targets related most closely to social inclusion and the knowledge-based society. The Commission also sends the message that **reforms should be both efficient and equitable**, and that learning partnerships need to be developed at all levels in order to improve the governance of the systems; the evaluation of policies also needs to be improved in order to monitor the effectiveness of reforms. **Better use of the structural funds** should also be made in relation to investment in human capital.

The Commission also adopted today a proposal for a **Recommendation of the Council and the Parliament on Key Competences** which sets out what are considered to be the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes that every European should have to prosper in a knowledge-based society and economy. The **eight key competences** identified include: (1) Communication in the mother tongue; (2) Communication in foreign languages; (3) Basic competences in maths, science and technology; (4) Digital competence; (5) Learning to learn; (6) Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, and civic competence; (7) Entrepreneurship; and (8) Cultural expression. These are underpinned by basic skills, and include 'horizontal components' such as critical thinking, creativity, the European dimension, and active citizenship. Taken together, they contribute to achieving personal fulfilment, active participation and improve a person's employability.

Also see [MEMO/05/415](#) : Modernising education & training systems

Also see [MEMO/05/416](#) : Key competences FAQ

More information:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_fr.html