



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
BETWEEN  
EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER ANDROULLA VASSILIOU  
AND THE LEADERS OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS**

**Brussels, 16 October 2013**

**Proposals to guide the way forward for a strengthened cooperation between the Commission's education and training services and the European social partners in the field<sup>1</sup>**

Education and training are central in the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs and the European Semester. As highlighted in recent policy initiatives, such as the Commission Communication “Rethinking Education” of November 2012 and the subsequent Council Conclusions of February 2013, making concrete progress in implementing the new policy in the areas of education and training requires a strong involvement of social partners to make this happen.

With a comprehensive knowledge of national situations and a thorough understanding of the underlying challenges, based on their membership’s substantial expertise, **European social partners can play a unique role in the design of EU policies and programmes and to secure their effectiveness, implementation and impact in the Member States.**

Social partners already take part and play an active role in a number of bodies aiming to support the development of EU vocational education and training (VET) policy, namely: the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP) and other bodies concerned with the implementation of the Copenhagen Process. Moreover, forms of cooperation have progressively been established in other domains of EU education and training policies, such as in the context of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education and of the Open Method of Coordination working groups.

In this light, during **an informal High Level meeting on 16 October 2013**, European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, the leaders of the European cross-industry organisations and of the social partners of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education have agreed to cooperate more closely on EU education and training policies.

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<sup>1</sup> ETUC – BUSINESSEUROPE – CEEP – UEAPME – ETUCE - EFEE

This cooperation will focus on **concrete contributions to outcomes** and will consider:

- The role that social partners play in securing an overall improvement of education and training by linking the worlds of education and work, notably the identification of skills requirements in accordance with labour market needs;
- The streamlining of the EU's education and training initiatives, tools and bodies;
- Provision of quality education and training by advocating more effective reforms taking into account the broader mission of education and training and the role and involvement of social partners at the appropriate levels;
- Specific social partners consultations on important education and training policy initiatives;
- Ways in which European and national social partners can contribute to addressing EU education and training priorities through EU programmes, in particular Erasmus Plus and the European Social Fund.

The strengthened cooperation will **concentrate on the priority areas** identified by the Commission in the Communication on "Rethinking Education", the country-specific recommendations under the European Semester, and other relevant initiatives such as the grand coalition for digital jobs, notably:

- 1) Quality education: Improving basic skills in primary and secondary education, and achieve excellence in higher education, including STEM skills;
- 2) Curricula development, e-skills, work-based learning, school-work transitions;
- 3) Lifelong learning, adult learning and workplace learning, including cost sharing;
- 4) Investment and funding of education and training, in the framework of national reforms.

The cooperation will add to this list other issues mainly relevant for education employees and employers such as:

- 1) Strategies to recruit, retrain and develop high quality teachers, spanning both initial teacher education and career-long professional development;
- 2) Delivery methods in schools, VET and higher education.

In this context, **cooperation could focus more specifically on the following European Commission initiatives:**

- 1) Preparation of the European Area of Skills and Qualifications for achieving transparency and recognition across borders of academic qualifications acquired in VET and higher education, and learning outcomes;
- 2) Implementation of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships;

- 3) Opening up Education to foster innovative teaching and learning through new technologies and by making educational resources more widely available;
- 4) Social Partner contributions to European and national debates on the effectiveness and efficiency of financing of education and training systems.

The European Commission recognises that **social partners' initiatives, at European and national level, can contribute to the success of its programmes**, through *inter alia* Erasmus+ partnerships (including Sector Skills Alliances and Knowledge Alliances) and in projects supported by the European Social Fund.

Moreover, it will seek ways to ensure the participation of social partners in ET2020 Technical Working Groups, where appropriate and taking into account social partners' capacities.

On their side, thanks to their membership structure in the Member States and their access to educational stakeholders, social partners can also play an important role in strengthening the outreach of major EU education and training policy initiatives that they support, especially as highlighted in the context of their frameworks of actions on the lifelong development of skills and competencies (2002) and on youth employment (2013).

- **The outcome of the high-level meeting will be presented to the stakeholders gathered in the 2013 European Education, Training and Youth Forum on 17-18 October 2013.**
- **The Commission and the European social partners will meet regularly at technical level to assess the progress made on the basis of the above priorities.**