

Brussels, 11 February 2011

EU will fail to achieve its education targets unless national objectives are upgraded, Ministers are warned

Education Council – 14 February: Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, will warn EU Education Ministers on Monday that they need to upgrade their national targets if Europe is to reach its 2020 goals for reducing early school leaving and increasing the number of graduates. The Commissioner will highlight the decision of the [European Council](#) last week to prioritize investment in growth-friendly areas like education, research and innovation.

The Ministers will discuss how improving education and training will contribute to getting Europe back on track and lay the foundations for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

As one of five headline targets of the Europe 2020 reform strategy, EU countries have pledged to reduce the share of early school leavers with low qualification levels from 14.4% now to less than 10% (this would mean at least 1.7 million fewer early school leavers), and to increase the number of students with a higher education or equivalent degree from 33% to 40% (equivalent to an extra 2.6 million graduates).

Most Member States – with the exception of the UK and Netherlands - have set national targets for both objectives to contribute towards the European goals. But taken together, the national targets would result in Europe failing to achieve its 2020 objectives by around 800 000 tertiary students and 200 000 early school leavers.

"The Commission stands ready to help Member States in achieving our joint objectives when analysing their national reform programmes," said Commissioner Vassiliou.

Ministers will discuss education and training in the light of the first [Annual Growth Survey](#), the European Commission's blueprint for a comprehensive and effective European response to the crisis. The survey sets out 10 priority actions aimed at promoting economic stability, structural reforms and specific measures to enhance growth.

Agenda for New Skills and Jobs

Commissioner Vassiliou will also present the Europe 2020 flagship initiative "[Agenda for New Skills and Jobs](#)" which sets out the Commission's strategy for increasing skills and employment, with more incentives to invest in training. *"We want to help create the right environment for job creation and ensure people have decent working conditions. To do that, we need to invest more and better in education and training so that people have the right the skills and the chance to upgrade them,"* said the Commissioner.

To help achieve these goals, the Commission will launch several new measures over the coming years, including the **EU Skills Panorama**, which will forecast what skills will be needed in the future, and a **European Skills Passport**, to record people's skills in a transparent and comparable way. Other initiatives, such as the Commission's new campaign on **literacy** (Commissioner Vassiliou set up an [expert group on this issue on 1 February](#)), will aim at ensuring that people acquire essential basic skills such as reading and writing.

To find out more:

[Commissioner Vassiliou's website](#)

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

European Commission: [Agenda for New Skills and Jobs](#)

European Commission: [Europe 2020 strategy](#)