

Brussels, 11 April 2005

Commission publishes Staff Working Paper on “Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training”

Following the Conclusions of the Heads of State in Lisbon in 2000 and their endorsement of the common objectives for education and training in Europe in Barcelona in 2002, a radically new process of cooperation has been launched in the education and training areas. The overall objective is to make education and training systems in Europe a world quality reference by 2010. In its second annual Commission Staff Working Paper “Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training”, the Commission analyses the performances of 30 education and training systems.

The analysis of available data provides a number of central messages on the performance and progress of educational systems in Europe. The European Commission has used 29 indicators identified and endorsed by experts from the participating countries. Among the many observations and conclusions to be found in the report :

The high number of early school leavers is an obstacle to securing greater social cohesion in the EU.

In 2004, almost 16% of young people aged 18-24 in the EU left school prematurely and were in danger of being on the fringes of the knowledge society. The Council has set a target to reduce this rate to 10% by 2010. Although some progress has been made since 2000, the majority of Member States need to increase their efforts in coming years to help reach the EU target.

An adequate supply of scientists is crucial for a competitive knowledge-based economy

The Council has set two objectives: to bring about a 15% increase in the number of graduates in these fields by 2010 and at the same time to redress the imbalance between women and men. At current trends both objectives will be achieved, the first objective even ahead of schedule. Best performing countries, with regard to Mathematics, Science and Technology graduates per 1000 population 20-29, are: Ireland, France, and the UK. Slovakia, Poland and Spain are the countries with the strongest growth in Mathematics, Sciences and Technology graduates since 2000.

Individuals must update and complement their knowledge, competencies and skills throughout life through participation in lifelong learning.

The rate of adult participation in education and training in 2004 reached 9.4% in the EU, i.e. 1.5% higher than in 2000. The objective set by the Council of achieving a 12.5% rate of adult participation requires Member States to develop an integrated, coherent and inclusive lifelong learning strategy.

The EU needs to attract more than one million teachers to the teaching profession over the next 10 years

The high proportion of older teachers in school education in the EU implies that within the period 2005-2015 more than one million teachers in Europe will have to be replaced. High-quality initial teacher training, in conjunction with a process of continuous professional development, is necessary to equip the teaching body with skills and competencies for its role in the knowledge society over the coming decades.

Most EU pupils do not reach the objective of proficiency in at least two foreign languages.

At present (2002), an average of only 1.3 and 1.6 foreign languages per pupil are taught in the Member States in general lower- and upper-secondary education respectively. Major efforts will have to be made by most countries in order to reach the objective of a European average level of at least two foreign languages taught to all.

The report can be found at this address :

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