



MODERNISATION AND EMPLOYABILITY THE CENTER OF A NEW STRATEGY HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

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Abstract

As part of the European strategy for growth and jobs, the European Commission presented in Brussels, in 2011 a reform strategy to boost graduate numbers, improve the teaching quality and maximize what higher education can contribute the EU economy emerge stronger from the crisis. The strategy identifies priority areas where EU countries need to do more to achieve shared education objectives and sets out how the European Union can support their modernization policies.

Keywords: *reform, higher education, European Commission, strategies.*

JEL classification: *M30, M31, M39*

The European Union has about 4000 universities and other higher education institutions and 19 million students. In recent years, the number and diversity of higher education institutions and student numbers have increased substantially. But often the financing, governance structures and curricula have failed to keep pace. Higher education does not work well enough to provide Europe with enough people with the appropriate skills to create jobs and economic growth.

Meanwhile, worldwide, Europe's competitors, especially emerging economies, rapidly increasing their investment in higher education.

Speaking at the launch of the strategy, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou, said: "The higher education is a powerful engine of economic growth and open the path to a better standard of living and opportunities for people. Also, is the best insurance against unemployment.

However, too many graduates have difficulty finding quality jobs. We need to reform higher education and training so that we equip young people with the skills they need to fulfill their potential in terms of development and employability."

Priority areas where further reforms are needed to include:

- *increasing the number of graduates by attracting a broader cross section of society in higher education and reducing the number of dropouts to complete their courses;*
- *improving the quality and relevance of higher education, so curricula, to meet individual needs of the labor market and the careers of the future, stimulating and rewarding excellence in teaching and research;*

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- *providing more opportunities for students to acquire additional skills through study or training abroad and encouraging cross-border cooperation to boost higher education performance;*
- *training more researchers to prepare the ground for the industries of tomorrow;*
- *strengthening the links between education, research and business to promote excellence and innovation;*
- *ensure effective financing constraints, exerted on higher education governance and investing in quality education to meet market needs;*

Many EU Member States establish priorities for the modernization of their higher education systems, however, the potential of European higher education institutions to contribute to Europe's prosperity and fulfill their wider role in society remains underexploited. This is why education is at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy, which has set a target that 40% of young Europeans have a higher education by the end of this decade (33.6% in 2010).

In July 2011, the Commission launched proposals for the next multiannual EU budget (2014-2020), which includes substantial increases for education, training and youth (73%) and research (46%), recognizing so their pivotal role in supporting economic growth.

Reform agenda for modernizing higher education will guide the spending priorities of EU programs to support reforms. Commission's reform strategy has been shaped by analyzes, studies and consultations with higher education institutions, teachers, researchers, students, businesses, unions, governments and international organizations. This is accompanied by a Commission Staff Working Paper that analyzes the recent developments in European higher education and research: "Modernization of Higher Education in Europe: funding and the social dimension, which analyzes trends in higher education funding and policies for opening access to higher education."

Higher education is essential for the development of knowledge and skills that Europe needs to be competitive in the global economy, but Member States are not investing enough in modernizing their systems of higher education. A new high-level group on the modernization of higher education, released in 2012 by the European Commission addressed this issue in a comprehensive screening exercise profile sector across the European Union, held every three years.

The group, chaired by Mary McAleese, former president of Ireland, will focus on best practices to achieve quality and excellence in teaching and learning, and in 2013 was approached the problem of adapting the educational process for the digital age. The group identified best practices and creative solutions and recommendations to policy makers both at national and European level as well as universities and colleges.

The first report of the group was ready in 2013 and his term will end in 2015. The launch of this group is part of a broader strategy to modernize higher education in the Member States. The Commission has already made considerable progress in this area. The Bologna Process has facilitated students studying abroad and their recognition across Europe.

Multidimensional classification system of European universities, which was first published in 2013, will also facilitate comparisons between universities for students to choose knowingly place where he will attend. Also, it will allow the Commission to monitor the universities in various fields that will underpin the new classification: the quality of



teaching and learning, research, knowledge transfer and international communication strategy role of universities in regional development.

However, it makes 16 recommendations, including a call for the introduction of mandatory training for teachers and other certified teachers in higher education, focusing on student support activities to develop entrepreneurial skills and innovative and to create a European Academy for teaching and learning.

European agenda for modernizing higher education, which was adopted by the Ministers of Education in the 28 to 29 November 2011, identifies areas where EU countries need to do more to achieve their common objectives and shows how the EU can offer support modernization policies. Priorities include improving the quality and relevance of higher education, so the curriculum to meet the needs of students, employers and careers of the future, and increase the number of graduates.

Agenda promote closer cooperation between universities, companies and research centers and is part of a broader strategy of the Commission, to promote growth and employment for 2020, in which education plays a crucial role.

“**Erasmus for All**”, the new program for education, training, youth and sport, to be released in January, will support policy reform in Member States, with emphasis on strengthening the knowledge base for policy development and sharing of best practice. It is expected that the program will have a budget of around 14.5 billion Euro for the period 2014-2020, 40% more than current programs offering grants for 4 million people, so that they acquire international experience and skills through learning, training or volunteering abroad.

In this report, The High Level Group is exploring various ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Each country has a different starting point, they tried to offer a wide range of instruments, tools and practical examples to show how different approaches can work and often is quite simple.

In this regard, the group recommends:

Recommendation 1: The public authorities responsible for higher education should ensure there is a sustainable framework, well-financed efforts to support higher education institutions in terms of improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 2: Each institution should develop and implement a strategy to support and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning, allocating the necessary human and financial resources for the task and mission of integrating this priority in general, with the same emphasis teaching and research.

Recommendation 3: Higher education institutions should encourage, appreciate and take account of feedback to students, which could detect early problems regarding teaching and learning and lead to improvements faster, more efficient.

Recommendation 4: In 2020, all members of the teaching staff in higher education institutions should be trained certified teacher. Vocational education teacher should become a requirement for teachers in higher education.

Recommendation 5: Decisions on the entry, advancement and promotion of teachers should take into account an assessment of teaching competence, among other factors.



Recommendation 6: Directors institutions and institutional leaders should recognize and reward (for example, through scholarships or awards) professors who make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning, either through their practice, either through research on teaching and learning.

Recommendation 7: Educational programs should be developed and monitored through dialogue and partnerships between teachers, students, graduates and actors on the labor market, based on new methods of teaching and learning so that students can acquire the skills relevant increase their employability.

Recommendation 8: The performance of students in the learning activities should be judged on clear learning objectives previously agreed and developed in collaboration with all faculty members who have participated in them.

Recommendation 9: Higher education institutions and national policy makers, in collaboration with students should create advising, tutoring, mentoring and tracking to support students from their entry into higher education until graduation and beyond.

Recommendation 10: Higher education institutions should introduce and promote approaches to teaching, learning and assessment of cross-curricular and interdisciplinary, to assist students to deepen their knowledge and develop their entrepreneurial and innovative spirit.

Recommendation 11: Higher education institutions with government and the EU should support their teachers so that, they develop their skills in teaching and learning online regarding other opportunities they offer the digital age, and should exploit the opportunities offered by technology to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 12: Higher education institutions should develop and implement the overall internationalization strategy as part of their mission and their duties. A greater mobility of students and staff, the international dimension of the curriculum, international experience of faculty members, a sufficient knowledge of English and a second foreign language, intercultural skills, courses and degrees transnational and international alliances should be become indispensable components of higher education in Europe and beyond.

Recommendation 13: The European Union should support the implementation of these recommendations, in particular by promoting: learning and teaching methodologies and innovative pedagogical approaches, methods of guidance, counseling and guidance, improving program design, taking into account the latest research on human learning, professionalization and development of teachers, trainers and staff, mobility and exchanges of academic staff for teaching long-term and systematic and regular data collection on issues affecting the quality of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 14: The European Union should support the creation of a European Academies of teaching and learning guided by stakeholders and inspired by the best practices reflected in this report.

Recommendation 15: Researchers supported by Marie Skłodowska-Curie and plans to begin a career in academia should be given the opportunity to gain professional teaching qualifications and teaching support activities in addition to their research activities.

Recommendation 16: Member States, in collaboration with the regions, are encouraged to



give priority in the partnership agreements of the Structural Funds to support development initiatives pedagogical skills, the development and implementation of relevant programs for social and market work and strengthen partnerships between higher education, industry and research.”

Further, the high level group will work on the second part of its mission, focusing on maximizing the impact of new methods of providing educational services quality such as many online courses open access (Massive Open Online Courses - MOOC), that allow access to higher education in 11 countries. The partners recently launched the first pan-European MOOC support the European Commission (IP/13/349).

Following report of the High Level Group to be published in June 2014.

Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: “By setting up the group, my goal was to encourage new ways of thinking and new ideas. Group's recommendations are timely, practical, and do not necessarily require large additional expenses. Teaching quality in our systems of higher education and training is crucial to ensure that students are provided with a range of appropriate skills for their future personal and professional development. The Commission will do its utmost to support the implementation of these recommendations.”

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