

## **World Teachers' Day (5 October): Commissioner pays tribute to profession**

*There are six million teachers in the European Union. Their role in developing our children's talents is crucial. Here, Commissioner Vassiliou pays tribute to the profession and outlines the Commission's plans to support it in future.*

On the occasion of World Teachers' Day 2011, I should like to express my sincere admiration for the six million teachers in the European Union. Their contribution to our society is vitally important. It is teachers who help each and every one of our children and young people to gain knowledge, to develop their personalities, their talents and abilities to their full potential, setting them on the road to personal fulfilment and success in adult life.

That is why teachers are at the heart of the Commission's efforts to help Member States improve the quality of their education and training systems. In this effort, I count on the teachers and their Unions to be our allies. Every year the European Union gives thousands of teachers the opportunity, through its programmes, to take part in further education and training abroad, or to accompany their classes in pupil exchanges and to co-operate with schools from other countries.

We are planning a major increase in the resources we invest in this kind of programme in the coming years. But our role also involves bringing experts and stakeholders together to find new ways to improve national education systems. Education Ministers have asked us particularly to focus on ways to improve career-long education for teachers and school leaders.

For most new teachers, the first few years in the profession can be challenging and stressful; indeed a sizeable proportion of new teachers leave the profession completely, which is a great loss to young people personally as well as to our schools. And yet, these problems can be reduced or even eliminated if education authorities take a few simple steps to provide personal, social and professional support to new teachers, so that they can effectively contribute and give their "best shot" in their everyday work in the school and the classroom.

That is why I am pleased that the European Commission, working with experts from many EU countries, has produced a guide for policy-makers aimed at developing induction programmes for new teachers (click [here](#)). The diversity of our education systems is of great value. This guide does not propose one single solution; it rather provides a menu from which an effective induction system can be developed. I believe it will lead to real benefits to the new teachers and to improvements.

Of course, identifying and encouraging the very best graduates to join the teaching profession is a key challenge for many countries. In 2012 the

Commission will publish research and best-practice ideas about making the teaching profession a more attractive career choice.

As demands on teachers grow, and the nature and complexity of their job increases, more and more attention is focused on the wide range of knowledge, attitudes and skills that teachers require. We will therefore publish a summary of good practice on teacher competences by the end of the year.

But on this important day, we should not forget a group of "unsung heroes" – the teacher educators. The quality of teaching in our schools and colleges depends on the knowledge and expertise of these people - whether they are expert teachers advising their colleagues in schools, or school leaders who promote staff development, or university researchers and trainers. We are currently preparing a major peer-learning event in March 2012 to discuss how education authorities can better support this key group.

Finally, to all teachers, school leaders and teacher educators, I say a big "Thank you!"

***Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth***