



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 01.02.2012  
C/2012/ 458 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank you for the Senát's Opinion on the Communication from the Commission "An agenda for new skills and jobs: a European contribution towards full employment" {COM(2010) 682 final}, and apologises for the delay in responding to this Opinion.

Ownership by and the active involvement of stakeholders, and in particular national Parliaments, are not only desirable but also essential for successfully implementing the flagship initiative 'An Agenda for new skills and jobs' and for the overall success of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The flagship initiative focuses on four priorities: ensuring that labour markets function better through flexicurity, equipping people with the right skills for employment, improving job quality and working conditions, and promoting job creation. The Commission recognises that the Member States have the main responsibility and instruments for achieving those objectives, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. It also believes that achieving the 75% EU employment rate calls for the pooling of all efforts and instruments. The 'Agenda for new skills and jobs' sets out how the EU could contribute to these joint efforts as part of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Commission agrees with the Senát that improving the quality of labour conditions should go hand in hand with improving labour efficiency. It also agrees on the need to develop targeted approaches. This is highlighted in the Communication in connection with the life-long learning component of flexicurity, particularly with regard to the specific groups referred to in the Resolution.

While the Member States and regions have responsibility for education and training systems, the European Union has an important role to play in contributing to the development of quality education, primarily by encouraging cooperation between Member States and supporting their actions. The Europe 2020 headline targets are shared goals to be achieved through a mix of national and EU action. Monitoring progress towards these goals is an effective way of encouraging cooperation and mutual learning. To ensure that each Member State implements the Europe 2020 Strategy in the light of its own situation, the headline targets have been translated into national targets

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*which are set in dialogue with the Commission in order to check that they are consistent with the EU headline targets. However, the Member States are free to set their targets as ambitiously as they wish, along with the policies to meet them.*

*The Strategic Framework for European Cooperation ('ET 2020') lays out a policy agenda that supports education and training systems with a view to ensuring they are more responsive to change and more open to the wider world in terms of skill needs. Under ET 2020, education and training systems should aim to transmit culture and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for lifelong personal fulfilment, active citizenship and employability. These goals are mutually reinforcing. To ensure that Europeans can prosper in an evolving society and on a changing labour market, education and training is needed to prepare the younger generation and older workers to acquire the right mix of key competencies, basic skills and professionally oriented skills and competencies through lifelong learning to succeed as citizens and on the labour market.*

*This includes teaching citizens to adapt to changes in society and in the working world by developing such key competencies as 'learning to learn' aptitudes, cultural awareness, civic competences and entrepreneurship, as well as creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, analytical and entrepreneurial skills, which are crucial competencies that are clearly defined in the European Key Competences Framework for lifelong learning.*

*The Commission shares the view that academic rigour and the transmission of scientific knowledge remain important objectives of higher education. They can be reinforced and supported by the development of transversal competences such as 'learning to learn' and critical thinking.*

*Improving employability should continue to be a priority of the EU's education and training systems, alongside the individual's personal fulfilment, because employment is a key to social inclusion and to prosperity both for the individual and the country. However, the skills that people need are changing fast, as jobs and the labour market evolve quickly in response to new challenges. Under the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, the Commission, in conjunction with the Member States, accordingly intends to develop an EU Skills Panorama to provide better information on future skill needs.*

*I am looking forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*