



11 October 2010

**MEETING BETWEEN COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE, MULTILINGUALISM, SPORT, MEDIA AND YOUTH, ANDROULLA VASSILIOU AND BUSINESSEUROPE DIRECTOR GENERAL, PHILIPPE DE BUCK****11 OCTOBER 2010**

BUSINESSEUROPE and its members are committed to contribute to a stronger collaboration between business and educational institutions. This is illustrated by the emphasis put on education and training in our Go for Growth publication and in the joint statement on the Europe 2020 strategy of European social partners.

Further to the framework of action on lifelong learning of 2002, an autonomous agreement was recently reached by European social partners on Inclusive Labour Markets. It suggests actions for social partners on a national level to undertake for instance concerning lifelong learning. In addition, it includes recommendations to governments in the field of education policies.

We are also active in the numerous committees and groups set up for the implementation of the Copenhagen and Bologna processes, towards a European learning area.

**Flagship initiative communication on Youth on the Move**

BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes the emphasis put on education and training to improve the difficult situation of many young people after the crisis. We also support the development in recent years towards tackling labour market challenges and education policies jointly. However, we believe that “Youth on the Move” should have addressed the skill shortage in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), insisted more on promoting entrepreneurship and reinforced the message on cooperation between educational providers and business.

**Flagship initiative communication on “New Skills and Jobs”**

BUSINESSEUROPE calls upon the Commission not to reinforce the support for establishing the European, Skills, Competencies, and Occupations Taxonomy (ESCO) in the upcoming communication on New Skills and Jobs. We question the feasibility of this exercise, considering that the taxonomy would need to be continuously updated in order to stay relevant to different labour market needs of EU Member States. We also fear that ESCO would withdraw focus from implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and that there is a risk of duplication of national systems.



### *The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills shortage*

The STEM skills shortage is one of the main obstacles for economic growth in the upcoming years. A lack of such skills will lead to less growth, lower productivity levels and a loss of international competitiveness. It also puts planned investments by companies at risk.

For the EU to remain a competitive knowledge economy, the Commission should therefore promote a cost-efficient financing of education in Member States, including a re-orientation of resources to STEM-educations to ensure a sufficient supply of high-quality graduates in these subjects. In order to increase the interest of STEM among scholars, the quality and relevance of their education in STEM needs to be improved. For this, more links should be created with business also at primary and secondary level as companies can provide a context that makes STEM subjects more interesting and concrete for scholars. Governments also hold a responsibility to update the professional skills of teachers by putting in place schemes for lifelong learning.

### *Vocational Education and Training (VET)*

Company involvement in vocational education and training must take place on a voluntary basis. Companies are best suited to decide on how to best spend resources to ensure development of their employees in the long run. However, in order to facilitate for companies to further involve in education and training, the Commission should encourage national governments to:

- Reduce bureaucracy, in particular surrounding the provision of apprenticeships.
- Explore positive incentive mechanisms for collaboration as an option. Successful schemes exist across Europe that could be learnt from.

BUSINESSEUROPE expects this to be acknowledged in the conclusions from Education Council of 18-19 November 2010 and in the subsequent Bruges communiqué on the priorities for the Copenhagen process in the next ten years.

### *University-business collaboration*

The potential of universities to function as a catalyst for economic growth is not fully realised. The Commission should encourage member States to address the scepticism in academia and schools to create links with business. Good examples of partnerships should be communicated.

BUSINESSEUROPE supports the University-Business Forum as it brings together stakeholders in higher education and research from academia and business. We further support the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, including the launch of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities.