

## **Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council** **Brussels, 24 February 2016**

The Council will start at 14.30 and will be devoted to education issues only. It will be preceded by a working lunch during which ministers will address the subject "**Education and the refugee crisis**", focusing on the role of citizenship and language education.

The meeting will be chaired by the Minister for Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands, Ms Jet Bussemaker. The Commission will be represented by Commissioner Tibor Navracsics and Commissioner Marianne Thyssen will participate in the policy debate on skills.

The Council is due to adopt a resolution on **socio-economic development and inclusiveness in the EU through education**, which will constitute the contribution of the education and training sector to the 2016 European Semester.

In public deliberation, ministers will hold a policy debate on "**Connecting education, the labour market and society**", with a view to raising awareness and underlining the urgency of the many issues relating to skills development. The debate will provide input to the Commission for its forthcoming initiative "A New Skills Agenda for Europe".

Finally, ministers will have an exchange of views on **promoting citizenship and fundamental values through education**, in the follow-up to the Paris Declaration adopted almost a year ago at the informal meeting of EU Education ministers in Paris.

**Press conferences**: At the end of the meeting (+/- 18.00)

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*Press conferences and public events can be followed by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>  
Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery: <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>*

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

## Socio-economic development and inclusiveness through education

The Council is due to adopt a resolution on promoting **socio-economic development and inclusiveness in the EU through education** ([5685/1/16 REV 1](#)).

The text focuses on possible measures to ensure effective investment in education and on how to address skills gaps and anticipate future skills requirements in order to restore jobs and promote sustainable economic growth in Europe. At the same time, it highlights the equally important role education has to play in meeting the many socio-economic challenges facing Europe and its citizens today, as also acknowledged by the 2016 Annual Growth Survey (AGS) ([14270/15](#)).

The resolution seeks therefore to respond not only to the messages in the AGS, but also to the findings of the latest edition of the Education and Training Monitor which made clear that a lot of progress is still necessary within EU's education and training systems. A significant number of learners fail to reach minimum standards in education and the Monitor shows that socio-economic status, migrant background and gender still determine educational performance.

([http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15_en.pdf))

The resolution also addresses the European Council, calling for targeted reforms and investments in education and training.

## Connecting education, the labour market and society- Towards a new skills agenda for Europe

Education ministers will discuss how to increase synergies between **education, the labour market and society**, on the basis of a Presidency background paper ([5745/16](#)).

A large share of the EU population lacks a sufficient level of basic skills to be employable and take part in social life. According to OECD surveys (notably PIAAC and PISA), almost 70 million European adults do not possess adequate literacy or numeracy levels and the situation of young people is not much better: one in five 15-year-olds is a low performer in these basic skills.

On the other hand, due to the economic crisis, people are more inclined to accept jobs below their qualification or skills level. Around 25% of highly qualified young adult employees are estimated to be overqualified for their job. However, nearly 40% of companies report difficulty in finding staff with the right skills, including digital skills.

Ministers are invited to react to one of these three statements:

1. Curricula and teaching methods should focus on developing a broader range of skills needed for the jobs of the future and society at large.
2. To reduce skills gaps and mismatches, education institutions should open up by actively engaging in partnerships with business and other relevant actors.
3. Member States should step up their efforts in identifying, activating and fully utilising the skills and qualifications of present and future generations. To support national policies and cross-border mobility, better use should be made of all relevant - improved - EU instruments

To launch the debate, the Presidency invited a guest speaker, Mr Torbjørn Røe ISAKSEN, Norwegian minister for Research and Education, which will participate in a personal capacity. Its contribution will be particularly relevant, since Norway is developing a national skills strategy and will be hosting a Skills Summit in June.

The outcome of the ministerial debate will provide input to the Commission's future initiative "A New Skills Agenda for Europe", expected for May, and aimed at promoting lifelong investment in people and increasing employability. The initiative will cover areas such as skills development, improving the transparency of qualifications, and addressing skills gaps and skills mismatches.

Education and training are expected to feature prominently in this initiative, notably through proposals improving existing transparency instruments in the education field, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Europass.

<http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/policy-context/european-vet-initiatives/european-qualifications-framework.aspx>

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>

A similar policy debate is foreseen at the EPSCO Council of 7 March, where Employment ministers will address skills related issues from a labour market perspective.

## **Promoting citizenship and fundamental values through education**

Ministers will have an exchange of views on measures to promote citizenship and fundamental values through education ([5545/16](#)), in the follow-up to the [Paris Declaration](#).

This joint declaration was adopted on 17 March last year by EU ministers for Education, together with Commissioner Navracsics, in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in early 2015.

Ministers undertook to defend Europe's common values through education, as well as to strengthen actions aimed at ensuring that all young people acquire social, civic and cultural competences. Successive Presidencies and the Commission have pledged to follow-up on the Paris Declaration.

The aim of the Netherlands Presidency for this ministerial exchange of views is to ensure that the declaration remains a dynamic and living document and to prepare the ground for possible future steps. The Presidency wished therefore to take stock of the measures taken at national, regional and local level in the education field since last year.

The ministers from three member states (France, Czech Republic and Spain) have been invited to present briefly a concrete example of a policy or project in their country related to one specific aspect of the Paris Declaration, France will address the issue of [media literacy](#), the Czech Republic will talk about [citizenship education](#), while Spain will consider empowering [teachers](#).