

# Ministers for Education cooperate for progress!

13/07/2010

Cooperation and exchange of good practice were the key words at the Seminar of the Ministers for Education. Two crucial themes were at the heart of the exchanges: the acquisition of basic skills and the early school leaving. With regard to European objectives, effective schooling followed by as many as possible is a shared priority, now more than ever.

At the Seminar of the Ministers for Compulsory Education, which took place on 9 July, Marie-Dominique Simonet, Minister for Compulsory Education and Improvement Classes for the French Community, and her European counterparts held an exchange of views and shared good practices on education.

These meaningful exchanges confirmed the desire and necessity for increased European dialogue on education along the lines set out by the Heads of State and Government as part of the 2020 EU Strategy.

The Seminar dealt with two themes essential for the future of European pupils: the acquisition of basic skills and early school leaving.

Mastering basic skills is a priority for educational policies since it is the key to successful integration into society and the labour market. At the seminar, the European Commissioner for Education, Androulla Vassiliou, proposed that two high-level groups be set up that would bring together representatives of the different countries.

One would be devoted to literacy and the other to mathematics and sciences. The findings of this work between experts would serve to make policies more efficient and put the most effective methods to best use.

Many European countries set out the reforms to their education system that had been undertaken to meet the challenges of achieving successful education from which everyone could benefit. This cross-fertilisation of ideas pinpointed the importance of holistic preventive policies that are regularly assessed, starting with preschool education at nursery school.

The particularly worrying problem of early school leaving was also the subject of constructive debate. All the players involved in education agreed that schooling and the acquisition of basic skills are a bridge for young people to employment and a bastion against poverty. The discussions showed a common desire to act at grass-roots level on an individual and preventative basis and to exchange information and case-book scenarios to ensure that as many pupils as possible were in full-time education. The European Commissioner, Androulla Vassiliou, took this opportunity to announce a forthcoming recommendation on early school leaving entirely in line with the adoption by the European Heads of State of an objective of reducing the drop-out rate to 10% in the next ten years (it was 17.6% in 2000 in the EU. Constantly on the decline, it was 14.9% in 2008.) This European goal is reflected in the decision presented by the French representative to reduce this rate to 9.5% nationally and to create, under the aegis of the Commission, a working group focusing on school drop-out.

At the end of the exchanges, Marie-Dominique Simonet called for meaningful meetings of this type, bringing together Education Ministers, to be held regularly, much like the one bringing together the Directors-General for Education on Thursday.

This seminar will have contributed to more intensive cooperation between the various European Union countries, building on the dynamism created with respect to strategies on education and life-long learning.

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