

Strasbourg, 23 November 2010

Agenda for new skills and jobs: EU sets out actions to boost employability and drive reform

23 million people are currently unemployed across the EU - 10% of the active population - with serious consequences for European growth and welfare systems. At the same time, some employers are reporting difficulties in recruiting, especially for high-skill jobs. In the future there could be shortages in areas like the ICT or health sectors with an estimated deficit of 700,000 ICT specialists by 2015 and one million researchers by 2025. To address these challenges and boost the EU employment rate to reach 75 % of men and women by 2020, the European Commission today launched its flagship initiative 'An Agenda for new skills and jobs'. It sets out 13 key actions aimed at reforming labour markets, upgrading skills and matching them with market demand to boost employability and make it easier to move jobs, to improve working conditions and job quality, and to create jobs.

László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion said: *Our priority is to get people working. We simply cannot afford an unemployment rate of close to 10%. The crisis has wiped out any past progress so we urgently need to reform labour markets, make sure skills are in line with demand and working conditions are right for job creation.*" He added: *"I am confident that all EU citizens will benefit from the proposed actions, in particular vulnerable groups that were hit hardest by the crisis."*

Commissioner Vassiliou said: *Today it is more than ever crucial that all citizens receive high quality education and training to equip them with the skills they need to find work. Lifelong learning must become a reality in Europe. For that to happen, a joint effort of all partners – governments, employers, trade unions and citizens – is essential. "*

As part of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth 'An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs' is the Commission's contribution to reaching the EU employment rate target for women and men of 75 % for the 20-64 years age group by 2020. The strategy also highlights the EU's targets to reduce the early school leaving rate to under 10% and increase the number of young people in higher education or equivalent vocational education to at least 40%.

Getting more people into work is key to sustaining Europe's social model and welfare systems as the EU working age population will soon start to shrink.

To make Europe's labour markets function better the Commission proposes thirteen concrete actions that will help:

To step up labour market reform to improve flexibility and security of labour markets ('flexicurity'). For example, one concrete proposal is to extend the use of open-ended contractual arrangements with a sufficiently long probation period and a gradual increase of protection rights, access to training, life-long learning and career guidance for all employees. This would aim to reduce the existing divisions between those holding temporary and permanent contracts.

- To give people and businesses the right incentives to invest in training to continuously upgrade people's skills in line with labour market needs. The Commission will soon launch an 'EU skills panorama' which will forecast the skills that will be required in future and help to ensure people have the right mix of skills (ICT and languages, for example) to boost their job prospects and adaptability. The Agenda puts forward a proposal to develop a shared interface - European Skills, Competences and Occupations classification – to bring together more closely the worlds of employment, education and training. The Commission also calls for reforms to ensure the recognition of professional qualifications and proposes to develop a European Skills Passport, to help citizens record their skills in a transparent and comparable way.
- To ensure decent working conditions while improving the quality of employment legislation, the Commission will present proposals to review the working Time Directive and propose a legislative initiative for the better implementation of the Posting of Workers directive. It will also look at health and safety at work legislation, preparing a new strategy for the future.
- To ensure the right labour market conditions are in place for job creation such as less administrative burdens or lowering the taxes on labour and mobility, this is especially important in fast-moving sectors like R&D-intensive sectors. The agenda will also encourage entrepreneurship, for example by exchanging best practice on entrepreneurship education, and through the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) programme.
- The Agenda for new skills and jobs complements the Commission's recently launched 'Youth on the Move' initiative, which aims to help young people to gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to make their first job a reality. (see [IP/10/1124](#)).

Background

Since the crisis has begun to hit labour markets in 2008, Europe has lost 5.6 million jobs. Assuming the labour market stabilises in 2010-2011, achieving an employment rate of 75 % by 2020 will require an average employment growth slightly above 1 % per annum.

Many labour markets across the EU need reform to function better, and there has to be a much stronger focus on skills upgrading and matching. Even throughout the crisis some employers struggled to find the people with the right skills to fill their vacancies. Jobs require increasingly sophisticated skills levels: Jobs held by highly-qualified people are expected to rise by 16 million between now and 2020, while those held by low-skilled workers will decline by around 12 million.

Further information

See [MEMO/10/602](#).

'An Agenda for new skills and jobs': Communication:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6328&langId=en>

'An Agenda for new skills and jobs': Citizens' summary:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6329&langId=en>