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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Improving the Quality of Teacher Education**

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# COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## Improving the Quality of Teacher Education

### INTRODUCTION

There are around 6.25 million teachers (full time equivalents) in Europe<sup>1</sup>. Teachers play a vital role in helping people develop their talents and fulfil their potential for personal growth and well-being, and in helping them acquire the complex range of knowledge and skills that they will need as citizens and as workers. It is school teachers who mediate between a rapidly evolving world and the pupils who are about to enter it.

The profession of teaching is becoming more and more complex. The demands placed upon teachers are increasing. The environments in which they work are more and more challenging.

Many Member States are reviewing the ways in which teachers are prepared for the important tasks they perform on behalf of European society.

The purpose of this Communication is to assess the current situation in the European Union as regards the education and training of teachers, and to propose a shared reflection about actions that can be taken at Member State level and how the European Union might support these<sup>2</sup>.

### 1. CONTEXT

#### 1.1 The Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 stressed that people are Europe's main asset and that "investing in people ... will be crucial both to Europe's place in the knowledge economy and for ensuring that the emergence of this new economy does not compound the existing social problems<sup>3</sup>."

The Barcelona Council in March 2002 adopted concrete objectives for improving Member States' education and training systems, including improving education and training for

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<sup>1</sup> Study *Mobility of Teachers and Trainers*, undertaken on behalf of Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2006 (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/mobility.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> This Communication relates to teachers in general education and in initial vocational education; for these purposes a teacher is a person who is acknowledged as having the status of a teacher (or equivalent) according to the legislation and practice of a Member State. It excludes persons employed outside the formal systems of education and training because of the different nature and context of the tasks they undertake.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the integrated guidelines for Growth and Jobs which recognise the importance of competences for employment, and in particular guideline No 23 on the need to adapt education and training systems in response to new competence requirements by, inter alia, ensuring the attractiveness, openness and high quality standards of education and training systems.

teachers and trainers. The Council in March 2006 noted that 'Education and training are critical factors to develop the EU's long-term potential for competitiveness as well as for social cohesion'; it added that 'Reforms must also be stepped up to ensure high quality education systems which are both efficient and equitable.'

However, progress has been insufficient<sup>4</sup> towards goals such as reducing the number of early school leavers, expanding the share of young people who finish upper-secondary school, or reducing the number of 15-year-olds with poor reading skills.

The quality of teaching is one key factor in determining whether the European Union can increase its competitiveness in the globalised world. Research shows that teacher quality is significantly and positively correlated with pupil attainment<sup>5</sup> and that it is the most important within-school aspect explaining student performance<sup>6</sup> (its effects are much larger than the effects of school organisation, leadership or financial conditions). Furthermore, other studies<sup>7</sup> have found positive relationships between in-service teacher training and student achievement and 'suggest that an in-service training program ... raised children's achievement ...(and) suggest that teacher training may provide a less costly means of increasing test scores than reducing class size or adding school hours'.

In 2004, the Council and Commission Joint Report on progress towards the Lisbon Objectives<sup>8</sup> in the fields of Education and Training called for the development of common European principles for the competences and qualifications needed by teachers and trainers. The Council in November 2006 stated that 'the motivation, skills and competences of teachers, trainers, other teaching staff and guidance and welfare services, as well as the quality of school leadership, are key factors in achieving high quality learning outcomes' and that 'The efforts of teaching staff should be supported by continuous professional development and by good cooperation with parents, pupil welfare services and the wider community.'

Improving the quality of Teacher Education is, therefore, an important goal for Europe's education systems if quicker progress is to be made towards meeting the common objectives that have been established under the Education and Training 2010 programme.

Ensuring a high quality of Teacher Education is also important, of course, to secure sound management of national resources and good value for money: approximately two thirds of expenditure on schools is allocated to teacher remuneration<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Commission annual report on progress towards the Lisbon objectives, 16 May 2006

<sup>5</sup> see, for example, Darling Hammond et al 2005, Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13(42) 16-17, 20

<sup>6</sup> Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2000; Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin 2005, 'Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement'.

<sup>7</sup> Angrist and Lavy, 2001, Does Teacher Training Affect Pupil Learning? Evidence from Matched Comparisons in Jerusalem Public Schools Journal of Labor Economics, 19, 2, 343-69

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir\\_council\\_final.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> OECD report Teachers matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers, 2005; [www.oecd.edu/teacherpolicy](http://www.oecd.edu/teacherpolicy)

## 1.2 Other policies and objectives of the Union

Teacher Education policy is closely connected with other key European policy areas, notably:

- Social policy with its emphasis on the role of education and training as a route out of poverty and a key factor of social inclusion, and the emphasis on 'core skills' in the Youth Pact;<sup>10</sup>
- Innovation policy<sup>11</sup> with its emphasis on ensuring that teachers help young people to acquire a spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Research policy with its emphasis on improving the teaching of sciences at all levels of education in the Union<sup>12</sup>.
- Enterprise policy<sup>13</sup> with its emphasis on the need for public authorities to promote education for entrepreneurship to heads of schools and teachers through initial and in-service training;
- The Commission's New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism<sup>14</sup> which promotes the value of language learning and which identifies the quality of language teaching and better training of language teachers as important challenges; and
- Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, which provides the legal framework for the professional mobility of teachers.

## 1.3 Changing demands

Changes in education and in society place new demands on the teaching profession. For example, as well as imparting basic knowledge, teachers are also increasingly called upon to help young people become fully autonomous learners by acquiring key skills, rather than memorising information; they are asked to develop more collaborative and constructive approaches to learning and expected to be facilitators and classroom managers rather than ex-cathedra trainers. These new roles require education in a range of teaching approaches and styles. Furthermore, classrooms now contain a more heterogeneous mix of young people from different backgrounds and with different levels of ability and disability. They are required to use the opportunities offered by new technologies and to respond to the demand for individualised learning; and they may also have to take on additional decision-taking or managerial tasks consequent upon increased school autonomy.

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<sup>10</sup> The European Youth Pact, [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/84335.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/84335.pdf)  
<sup>11</sup> as presented in the Communication Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU COM(2006) 502 final

<sup>12</sup> A high level group chaired by Mr. Michel Rocard MEP has examined existing European and national innovative ongoing initiatives activities in the field of scientific education. Their report, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.topic&id=1100&lang=>, calls for the introduction of a new approach to science education that breaks radically with traditional pedagogical methods.

<sup>13</sup> See Commission Communication *Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning* COM(2006) 33 final

<sup>14</sup> COM(2005)596 of November 2005

These changes require teachers not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to develop them continuously. To equip the teaching body with skills and competences for its new roles, it is necessary to have both high-quality initial teacher education and a coherent process of continuous professional development keeping teachers up to date with the skills required in the knowledge based society.

As with any other modern profession, teachers also have a responsibility to extend the boundaries of professional knowledge through a commitment to reflective practice, through research, and through a systematic engagement in continuous professional development from the beginning to the end of their careers. Systems of education and training for teachers need to provide the necessary opportunities for this.

#### **1.4 Skills shortages and limited training provision**

However, systems for Teacher Education are not always well equipped to meet these new demands.

In a recent OECD survey<sup>15</sup>, almost all countries report shortfalls in teaching skills, and difficulties in updating teachers' skills. Shortages relate especially to a lack of competence to deal with new developments in education (including individualised learning, preparing pupils for autonomous learning, dealing with heterogeneous classrooms, preparing learners to make the most of the ICT, and so on).

In many Member States there is little systematic coordination between different elements of teacher education, leading to a lack of coherence and continuity, especially between a teacher's initial professional education and subsequent induction, in-service training and professional development; nor are these processes often linked to school development and improvement, or to educational research. Incentives for teachers to carry on updating their skills throughout their professional lives are weak.

Investment in the continuous training and development of the teaching workforce is low across the European Union and the amount of in-service training available to practising teachers is limited. In-service training for teachers is compulsory in only eleven Member States; teachers are not explicitly obliged to undertake it in all of these states<sup>16</sup>. Where it exists, training generally amounts to less than 20 hours per year. There is no Member State in which the minimum compulsory training exceeds five days per year, and in most countries only three days of training per year is compulsory. Furthermore, the fact that in-service training may be compulsory says little about actual participation rates.

As regards new teachers, only half of the countries in Europe offer new teachers any systematic kind of support (e.g. induction, training, mentoring) in their first years of teaching. Explicit frameworks to assist teachers who experience difficulties in performing their duties adequately exist in only one third of countries.

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<sup>15</sup> *Teachers Matter*, OECD 2005

<sup>16</sup> For a full explanation of the data on which these tables are based, and the definitions used, please refer to: *Key data on Education in Europe 2005*, Eurydice, ISBN 92-894-9422-0; <http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=052EN>

Table 1 below shows whether in-service training is compulsory or optional.

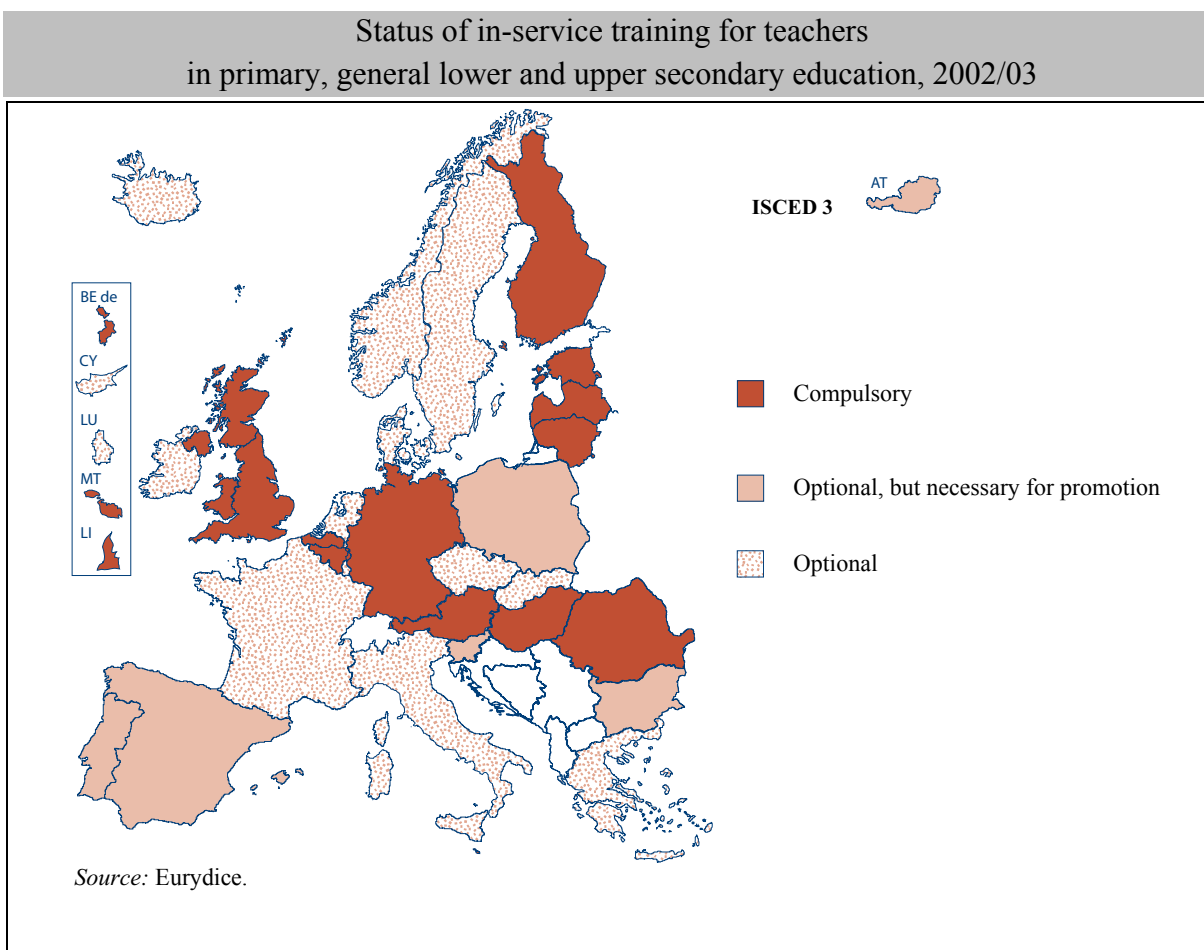


Table 2 below shows that the minimum annual time allocation for compulsory in-service training varies by country.

**Minimum annual time allocation (in hours) for compulsory in-service training in primary, general lower and upper secondary education, 2002/03**

|                | BE fr  | BE de | BE nl | DE | EE | LV | LT | HU | MT | AT | FI | UK-ENG/<br>WLS/NIR | UK-<br>SCT | LI | RO |
|----------------|--|-------|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------|------------|----|----|
| <b>ISCED 1</b> | 21   | 21    | 14    | v  | 32 | 12 | 18 | 17 | 21 | 15 | 18 | v                  | 35         | v  | 19 |
| <b>ISCED 2</b> | 21   | 21    | 21    |    | 32 | 12 | 18 | 17 | 21 | 15 | 18 |                    | 35         |    | 19 |
| <b>ISCED 3</b> | 21   | 21    | 21    |    | 32 | 12 | 18 | 17 | 21 | 4  | 18 |                    | 35         |    | 19 |
| x              | CZ, DK, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, CY, LU, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, SE, IS, NO and BG. |       |       |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |                    |            |    |    |

x In-service training is not compulsory v Variable

Source: Eurydice.

Additional notes

**Belgium:** Three days a year.

**Germany:** The amount of compulsory in-service training varies from one *Land* to the next.

**Estonia:** 160 hours over a five-year period.

**Lithuania:** 15 days spread across five years of training. This corresponds to 90 hours spread over five years.

**Latvia:** The central education authorities have laid down a minimum time allocation of 36 hours for three years.

**Hungary:** Every seven years, 60-120 hours of in-service training are compulsory.

**Malta:** Three days a year at the beginning or end of the school year. Since 2001/02, three annual two hours sessions after school have been introduced.

**Netherlands:** 10% of a teacher's annual working hours should be spent on the advancement of professionalism. This is a formally stipulated amount of time that is available for teachers to claim.

**Austria:** For ISCED level 2, the information given here relates to teachers working in *Hauptschulen*. For teachers at *allgemein bildenden höheren Schulen* the amount of training is not specified.

**Finland:** Three days a year of six hours each.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR):** The five days in the school year when school sessions are not required are often used for in-service training. In addition, participation in arrangements for professional development is an essential aspect of professional duties.

**United Kingdom (SCT):** There is a minimum of five days for in-service training. Teachers should also spend 50 hours a year on planned activities; some of this time may also be used for in-service training.

**Liechtenstein:** Teachers must participate in at least one training activity every two years.

**Romania:** 95 hours every five years, unless teachers take professional degrees during this period.

Explanatory note

**Calculation:** Unless stated otherwise in the above notes, one day corresponds to seven hours. For countries where a certain amount of training over several years is compulsory, the calculation is based on an average.

Table 3 below shows that support measures for new teachers are still not widespread. In 2002, only half of all countries offered new teachers assistance during this period of their career.

**Regulations and/or recommendations on types of support and supervision available to new entrants to the teaching profession in primary education and (lower and upper) general secondary education, 2002/03**

| TYPE OF SUPPORT  | CZ | DE | EL | ES | IE | IT | CY | PL | SK | UK-<br>ENG/<br>WLS | UK-<br>-<br>NIR | IS | LI | NO | BG |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-----------------|----|----|----|----|
| Formal/semi-formal meetings (for the discussion of progress or problems) |    |    | o  | o  |    | o  | o  | o  | o  |                    | o               | o  | o  |    | o  |
| Opinions, information and informal discussion                            | o  |    | o  | o  | o  | o  | o  | o  | o  |                    | o               | o  | o  |    | o  |
| Assistance with the planning of lessons                                  |    |    | o  | o  |    | o  |    | o  | o  |                    |                 | o  | o  |    | o  |
| Assistance with the assessment of pupils/writing their school reports    |    |    |    | o  |    | o  |    | o  | o  |                    | o               | o  | o  |    |    |
| Participation in classroom activity and/or classroom observation         | o  |    | o  | o  | o  |    | o  | o  | o  |                    | o               |    | o  |    | o  |
| Advice concerning skills   |    |    | o  | o  |    | o  | o  | o  | o  |                    | o               | o  |    |    | o  |

|  |  |   |          |          |  |          |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |          |
|--|--|---|----------|----------|--|----------|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|----------|
| Organisation of seminars/workshops/discussion groups         |  |   | o        | o        |  |          | o | o | o |   |   |  |  |  |   | o        |
| Visits to other schools/resource centres                     |  |   |          | o        |  |          |   | o |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |          |
| Special compulsory training (with a minimum time allocation) |  |   | o<br>(1) | o<br>(2) |  | o<br>(3) |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   | o<br>(4) |
| Manual   |  |   |          |          |  |          |   |   |   |   | o |  |  |  |   |          |
| Pilot projects (implementation in hand)                      |  | o |          |          |  |          |   |   |   | o |   |  |  |  | o |          |
| No current measures  | BE, DK, EE, FR, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PT, SI, FI, SE, RO |   |          |          |  |          |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |          |
|  | (1) 100 hours (2) variable (3) 40 hours (4) up to 24 hours     |   |          |          |  |          |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |          |
| <i>Source:</i> Eurydice.                                     |  |   |          |          |  |          |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |          |

## 1.5 Characteristics of the Teaching profession in the European Union

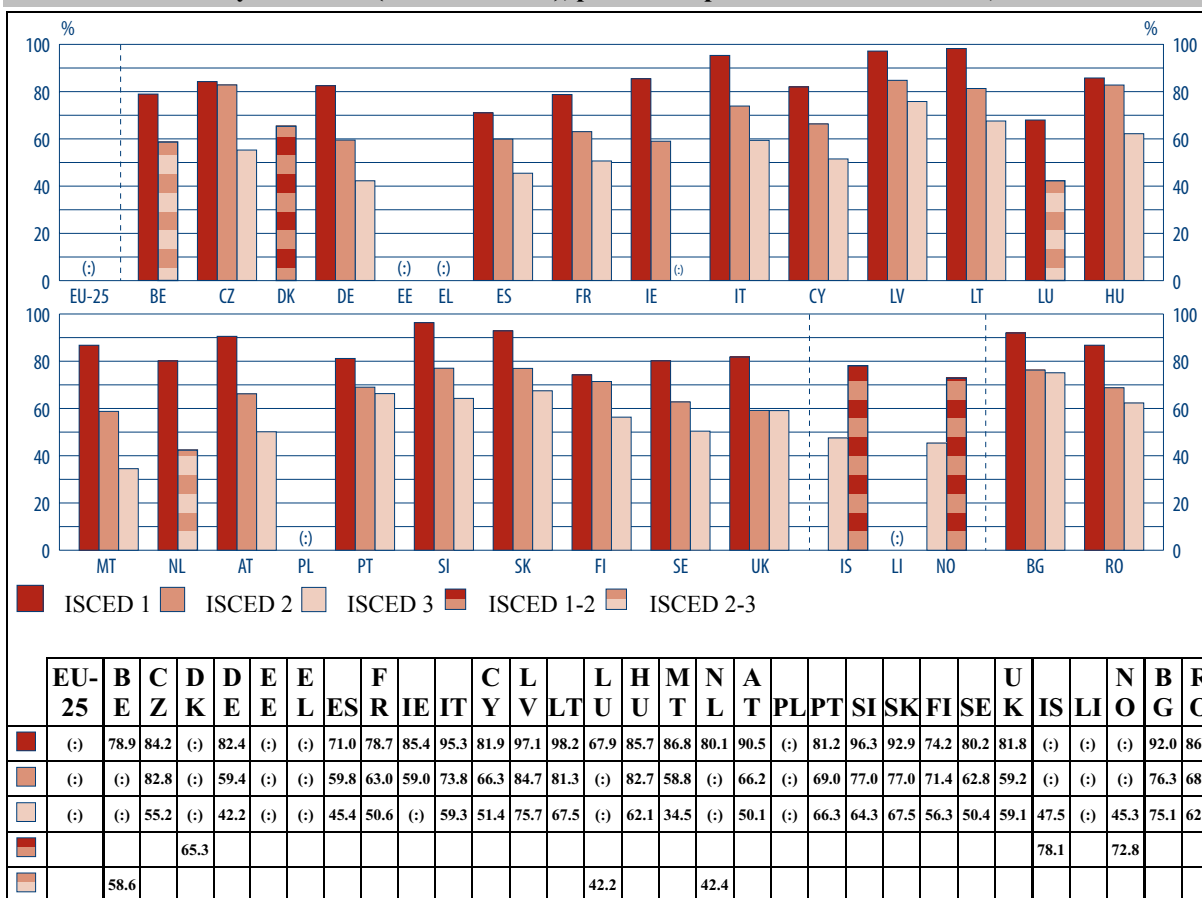
### *Gender*

Table 4 below shows that the majority of teachers in both primary and secondary education are women<sup>17</sup>. In 2002 in all European Union countries except one, over 70% of teachers in primary education (ISCED 1) were women. The proportion of women teachers in lower secondary education (ISCED 2) is not as high as in primary education. While the proportion of women in upper secondary education is less striking, they outnumber men in nearly all countries.

<sup>17</sup> *Key data on Education in Europe 2005*, Eurydice, ISBN 92-894-9422-0



**Percentage of women teachers in primary education (ISCED 1) and secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3), public and private sectors combined, 2001/02**



*Remuneration*

The supply of teachers is affected by a number of factors, including remuneration. There are marked differences between countries in the wages of teachers relative to average wages and GDP. In Luxembourg and Germany, teacher salaries are high relative to average national incomes. The highest maximum salaries relative to per capita GDP are in Portugal, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg and Spain.

The differential with other public sector professions and private sector pay affects the retention of teachers in the teaching workforce and is in turn affected by general labour market conditions. When labour demand is high, more teaching graduates opt for a job outside the teaching profession. Comparative wages especially influence retention rates for men.

A comparative study of teaching and other public sector professions or private sector posts for equivalent levels of qualifications<sup>18</sup>, has found that teachers who receive higher pay relative to other professions, are less likely to leave the profession. UK research found that the wages of teachers, relative to other professions which are open to teacher training graduates, are

<sup>18</sup> Dolton, P. J. and Van der Klaauw, W. 'Leaving teaching in the UK – a duration analysis'. *Economic Journal* 105 (429), 431-444, 1995.

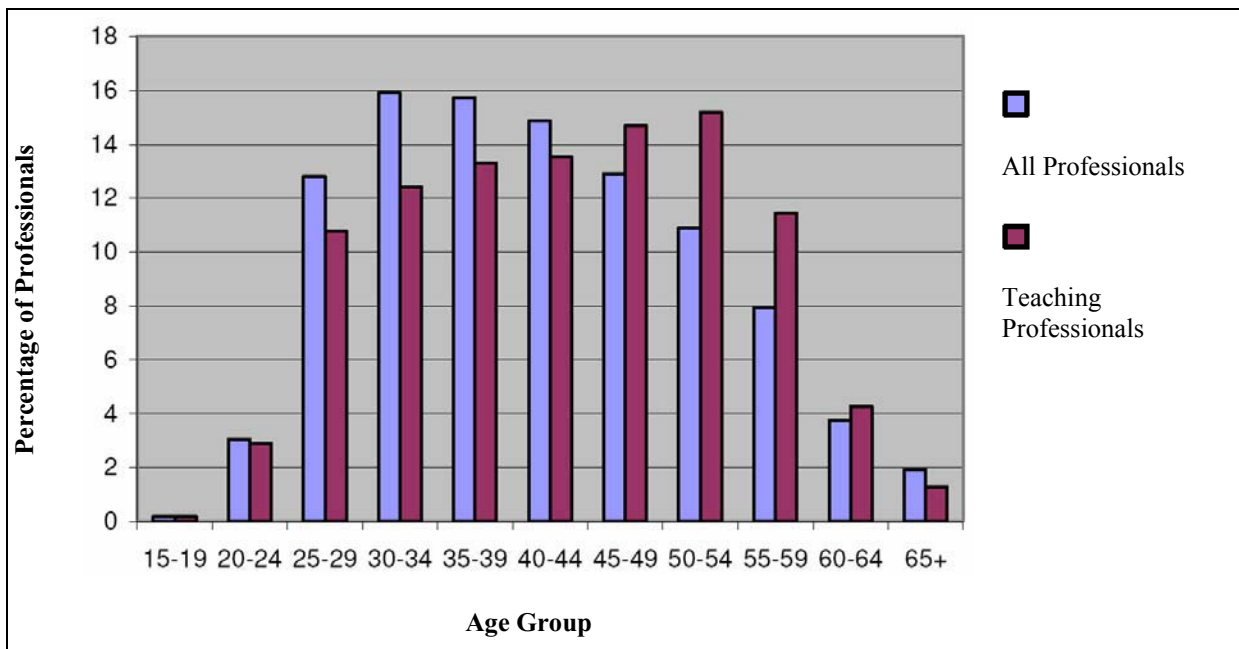
deemed to be an important determinant of the decision to take up and remain in the profession.

*Age*

In contrast with other professions, the teaching profession has a high percentage of older workers (see Table 5). The proportion of teachers aged between 45 and 64 is over 40% in many countries while as many as 30% of the teaching population are aged between 50 and 64 years of age in some countries<sup>19</sup>. This has clear implications for teachers' (re)training needs.

It will be important to make teaching an attractive career choice, in order to recruit the best candidates and to attract people to switch careers in favour of teaching. In contrast to recent practice in many Member States, experienced teachers will increasingly need to be persuaded to remain in the profession instead of retiring early and may therefore require additional professional development and support.

**Table 5:** Age structure of all professionals and teachers (2005)<sup>20</sup>



Overall, there is a need to take necessary steps to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of well-educated and motivated men and women in the profession, in particular to replace the age cohorts that are in decline.

<sup>19</sup> Study *Mobility of Teachers and Trainers*, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2006  
<sup>20</sup> Idem

## **2 A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

### **2.1 Current European Union support for teacher education**

Member States are responsible for the organisation and content of education and training systems. The role of the European Union is to support them.

At European level, Community programmes such as the Comenius and Erasmus actions within the Socrates programme, and the Leonardo Da Vinci programme have provided support for projects to promote the development of teachers' competences. The new Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) will increase support for teacher mobility and for cooperation projects between teacher education institutions<sup>21</sup>.

The European Social Fund is also an important instrument that will be used to support the modernisation of Education and Training systems, including the initial and continuing education of teachers in Member States.

### **2.2 Joint Work with Member States**

The European Commission works closely with Member States to help them develop and modernise their education and training policies. It does this through the 'Education and Training 2010' Work Programme, part of the revised Lisbon Strategy, which facilitates the exchange of information, data and best practice through mutual learning and peer review.

In response to the Council's identification of teacher education as a key issue, the Commission in 2002 established a working group to reflect upon on improving the education of teachers and trainers, which brought together the representatives of the 31 countries that participate in the Education and Training 2010 work programme<sup>22</sup>.

Subsequent work by the Commission and national experts showed widespread agreement about the changes required. A set of Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications<sup>23</sup> was drawn up in cooperation with experts appointed by the Member States and tested in 2005 at a European Conference of senior policy makers, experts in the field of teacher education and major stakeholders. Many countries have already begun using the Common European Principles to enrich their reflection on policy development on teacher education.

The Commission and Member States have continued to explore responses to the challenges identified, through the group on 'Teachers and Trainers', which comprises experts nominated by the 18 Member States which have expressed a particular concern to develop their policies on Teacher Education. It has organised a series of peer learning activities on areas of shared policy concern, including systems of continuing professional development, the school as a learning community for its teachers, School Leadership, preparing teachers for culturally

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<sup>21</sup> Decision 1720/ 2006/ EC

<sup>22</sup> Working Group on improving the education of teachers and trainers, progress reports 2003, 2004: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives\\_en.html#training](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html#training)

<sup>23</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf_en.html)

diverse classrooms, and partnerships between schools and companies. Member States find that this kind of work provides useful learning opportunities.

### 2.3 Common principles

The challenges facing the teaching profession are, in essence, common across the European Union. It is possible to arrive at a shared analysis of the issues and a shared vision of the kinds of skills that teachers require.

The Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, referred to above, were written on the basis of the experience of teachers and teacher educators across Europe and validated by stakeholders. It describes a vision of a European teaching profession that has the following characteristics:

- it is **well-qualified** profession: all teachers are graduates from higher education institutions (and those working in the field of initial vocational education are highly qualified in their professional area and have a suitable pedagogical qualification). Every teacher has extensive subject knowledge, a good knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and competences required to guide and support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education.
- it is a profession of **lifelong learners**: teachers are supported to continue their professional development throughout their careers. They and their employers recognise the importance of acquiring new knowledge, and are able to innovate and use evidence to inform their work.
- it is a **mobile** profession: mobility is a central component of initial and continuing teacher education programmes. Teachers are encouraged to work or study in other European countries for professional development purposes.
- it is a profession based on **partnership**: teacher education institutions organise their work collaboratively in partnership with schools, local work environments, work-based training providers and other stakeholders.

In line with these principles, and in the light of the foregoing analysis, the Commission believes that the following policy steps could be addressed to improve the quality of Teacher Education in the European Union.

#### 2.3.1 *Lifelong learning*

Initial education cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a life-time of teaching. The education and professional development of every teacher needs to be seen as a lifelong task, and be structured and resourced accordingly.

Provision for teacher education and development will be more effective if it is coordinated as a coherent system at national level, and is adequately funded. The ideal approach would be to set up a seamless continuum of provision embracing initial teacher education, induction into the profession, and career-long continuing professional development that includes formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities. This would mean that all teachers:

- take part in an effective programme of induction during their first three years in post / in the profession;
- have access to structured guidance and mentoring by experienced teachers or other relevant professionals throughout their career;
- take part in regular discussions of their training and development needs, in the context of the wider development plan of the institution where they work.

In addition, the Commission believes that all teachers would benefit if:

- they are encouraged and supported throughout their careers to extend and develop their competences via formal, informal and non-formal means, and are able to have their relevant formal and non-formal learning recognised;
- they have access to other opportunities for continuous professional development, such as exchanges and placements (whether or not funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme); and
- they have the opportunity and time to study for further qualifications, and take part in study and research at a higher education level.
- more is to be done to promote creative partnerships between the institutions in which teachers work, the world of work, higher education and research institutions, and other agencies, in order to support high quality training and effective practice, and to develop networks of innovation at local and regional levels.

### 2.3.2 *Necessary skills*

Teachers have a key role to play in preparing pupils to take their place in society and in the world of work. At every point in their career, teachers need to have, or be able to acquire, the full range of subject knowledge, attitudes and pedagogic skills to be able to help young people to reach their full potential. In particular they need the skills necessary to:

- identify the specific needs of each individual learner, and respond to them by deploying a wide range of teaching strategies;
- support the development of young people into fully autonomous lifelong learners;
- help young people to acquire the competences listed in the European Reference Framework of Key Competences<sup>24</sup>;
- work in multicultural settings (including an understanding of the value of diversity, and respect for difference); and

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<sup>24</sup>

See Recommendation of the Parliament and the Council 2006/962/EC

- work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community.

Given the increasing demands placed upon school leaders, and the difficulties sometimes experienced in filling leadership posts, it would also be advantageous if teachers had adequate opportunities to acquire, develop and use skills of leadership.

### 2.3.3 *Reflective practice and research*

Teachers help young people to take responsibility for mapping out their own learning pathways throughout life. Teachers should be able to take charge of their own learning pathways also. Furthermore, as with members of any other profession, teachers have a responsibility to develop new knowledge about education and training. In a context of autonomous lifelong learning, their professional development implies that teachers:

- continue to reflect on their practice in a systematic way;
- undertake classroom-based research;
- incorporate into their teaching the results of classroom and academic research;
- evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies and amend them accordingly; and
- assess their own training needs.

The incentives, resources and support systems necessary to achieve this would need to be put in place.

### 2.3.4 *Qualifications*

Given the complexity of the demands placed upon teachers, the range of knowledge and skills that they are required to master, and the need for them to have sufficient practical experience in real classrooms as a part of their initial education, it is not surprising that initial Teacher Education courses are demanding. In 18 Member States, initial Education courses for upper secondary teachers last at least five years and lead to a university level qualification (ISCED 5A); for lower secondary teachers 12 Member States require initial education at university level of at least five years<sup>25</sup>.

Consideration could be given to moving to a higher level qualification policy, as already adopted in some countries.

### 2.3.5 *Teacher Education in Higher Education*

To ensure that there is adequate capacity within Higher Education to provide for the quantity and quality of Teacher Education required, and to promote the

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<sup>25</sup> Eurydice: *Key Data on Education in Europe, 2005*

professionalisation of teaching, teacher education programmes should be available in the Master and Doctorate (as well as the Bachelor) cycles of higher education.

Links between teacher educators, practicing teachers, the world of work and other agencies need to be strengthened. Higher Education institutions have an important role to play in developing effective partnerships with schools and other stakeholders to ensure that their Teacher Education courses are based upon solid evidence and good classroom practice.

Those responsible for educating teachers (and for educating teacher educators) should possess practical experience of classroom teaching and have attained a very high standard in the skills, attitudes and competences demanded of teachers.

### 2.3.6 *Teaching in society*

Teachers act as role models. It is important for pupil attainment that the profession fully reflects the diversity of the society in which it operates (in terms, for example of culture, mother tongue, and (dis)ability). Member States could take measures to ensure that the composition of the teaching workforce fully reflects the diversity of society, and in particular remove obstacles to culture and gender balance at all levels.

## **3 THE COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION**

In order to support Member States in their reforms of Teacher Education, the Commission proposes to:

- (1) ensure that the new Lifelong Learning Programme and the European Social Fund support Member States' efforts to improve the provision and content of teacher education, and to encourage the mobility of teachers and trainee teachers;
- (2) develop indicators that better reflect the issues involved in improving education and training for teachers and their recruitment, and report on progress in the quality of teacher education through the biennial reports on the Education and Training 2010 programme;
- (3) contribute to the creation and dissemination of new knowledge in the field of teaching and teacher education; and support Member States in making effective use of it, through the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Research Framework Programme;
- (4) support the development of initiatives that promote the European dimension of teacher education and the mobility of teachers;
- (5) review progress and bring forward further proposals.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

This Communication has identified the quality of teaching and Teacher Education as a key factor in securing the quality of education and improving the educational attainment of young people. It has listed a number of steps that could now be taken in this field, and ways in which the Commission can support that work.

Taken together, these proposals would serve to: ensure that provision for teachers' education and professional development is coordinated, coherent, and adequately resourced; ensure that all teachers possess the knowledge, attitudes and pedagogic skills that they require to be effective; support the professionalisation of teaching; promote a culture of reflective practice and research within the teaching profession; and promote the status and recognition of the profession.

In doing so, they will contribute to improving the quality of education for all and help Member States achieve their Lisbon goals for social cohesion and economic competitiveness and growth.

The Commission will seek to take forward these proposals within the Education and Training 2010 programme, working with the 'Teachers and Trainers' Cluster of Member State experts. It will be assisted in this task by the forthcoming conferences organised in the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to respond to the issues outlined in this Communication.